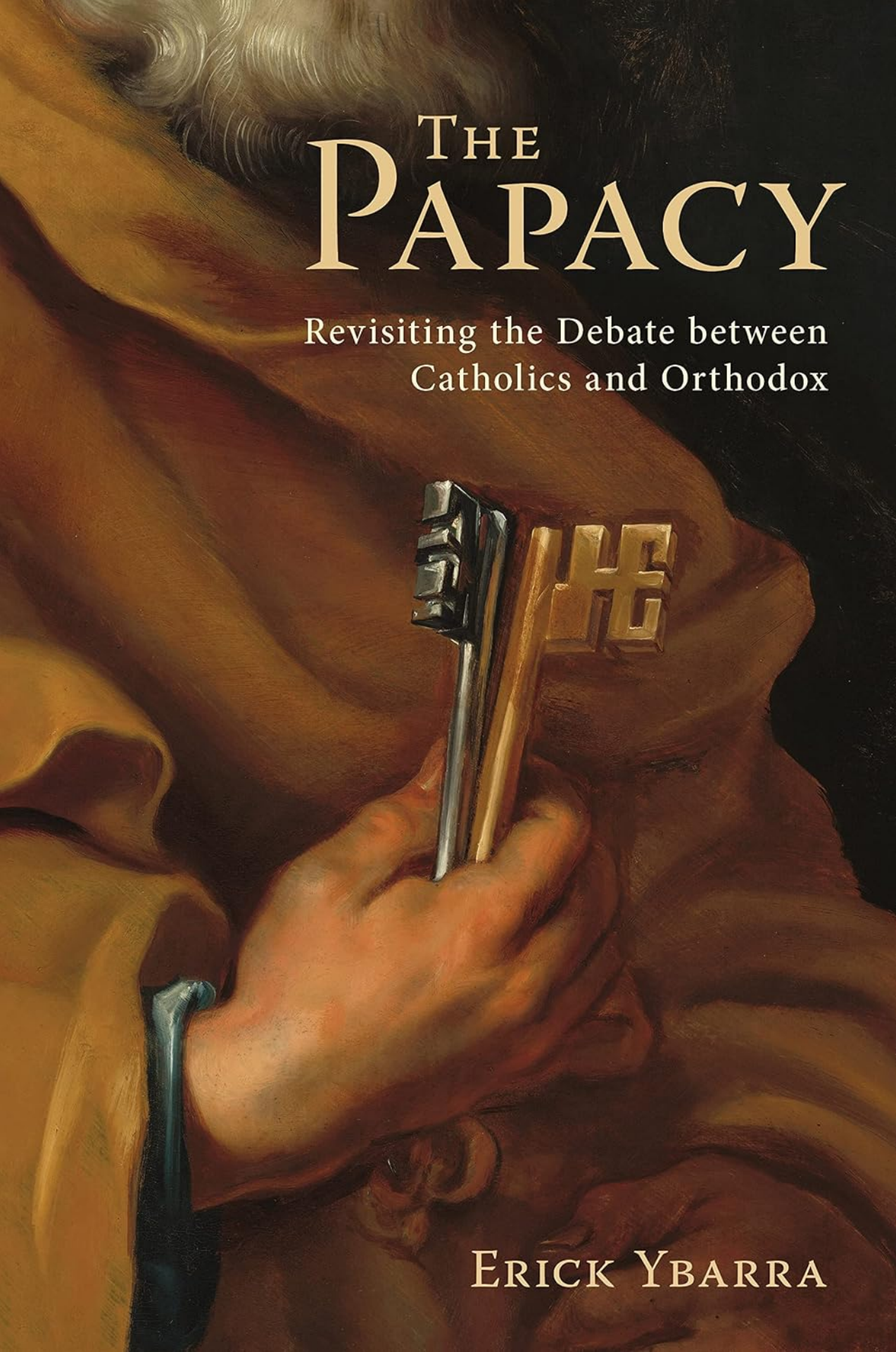
THE
PAPACY
Revisiting the Debate between
Catholics and Orthodox
ERICK YBARRA

## Praise for *The Papacy*

"Erick Ybarra deserves much praise for this excellent book. As is well known, Catholics and Eastern Orthodox are divided over the primacy and universal authority of the Roman Pontiff. What, though, is the record of the first millennium prior to the Schism of 1054? This book examines the historical details of papal interventions and teachings of the first millennium as well as affirmations of universal papal authority by saints recognized by both Catholics and Orthodox. It also discusses the controversial cases of Popes Liberius, Vigilius, and Honorius I, and it highlights the importance of the Tome of St. Agatho endorsed by Constantinople III. Ybarra provides a great service to those interested in Catholic and Orthodox perspectives on the authority of the Bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter."

Robert L. Fastiggi, Ph.D.
*Bishop Kevin M. Britt Chair of Dogmatic Theology and Christology, Sacred Heart Major Seminary*

"Jesus once asked Peter, 'Who do you say that I am?' But in recent centuries, Peter's successors, the popes, have turned that question around to all Catholics and Orthodox, asking, 'Who do you say that I am?' Who is the pope? What is the papacy? What authority does the pope have, and how far does it extend? These are enduring questions that have been debated for more than a thousand years. But this significant new study from Erick Ybarra approaches them with fresh perspective. Irenic in tone, thorough in scholarship, and fair to opposing views, Erick not only defends the papacy against new Orthodox objections but analyzes the more basic historical, methodological, and interpretive foundations underlying this debate. The result is an impressive tour de force, the new go-to book for understanding this central point of tension between Catholics and Orthodox."

Brandon Vogt
*Founder of ClaritasU and Author of*
Why I Am Catholic (and You Should Be Too)

"Both Orthodox and Catholic Christians today have inherited a history and a theological legacy that we did not ourselves create. It is therefore essential that we deal honestly and comprehensively with those aspects of

our history which both favor and challenge our own theological assumptions to identify the ecumenical path forward towards that union which Our Lord Jesus Christ willed for his Church. Ironically, the foundation and exercise of the Petrine ministry by the Bishop of Rome—an episcopal ministry whose dominical purpose is at the service of the unity of mind and heart among all bishops and Churches—has historically been regarded as the principal source of division, especially between the Chalcedonian Christians of East and West. Erick Ybarra, in his *The Papacy*, not only lays out the biblical and patristic foundations on this issue, he engages contemporary Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant theological scholarship and magisterial sources utilized in both dialogue and debate as a lens to apply to the difficult and divisive history of the exercise of the papacy in the ancient, medieval, and modern periods of Church history. What is more, Ybarra makes a compelling case for the Catholic theological position on the Petrine ministry of the Pope of Rome as part of the apostolic and pastoral architecture intended by Christ in support of a universal communion of a missionary Church of the Nations, as opposed to a mere federation of national churches. If the Christian Church is to once again bear witness to the Gospel to a divided and de-Christianized world, it must do so in unity with 'the first of the apostles, the foundation of the Church, the *coryphaeus* [conductor] of the choir of the disciples' (St. John Chrysostom) as embodied in *The Papacy*."

**Fr. Daniel G. Dozier**
*Byzantine Catholic Priest*
*and Author of* 20 Answers on Eastern Catholicism

"In this massive volume, apologist Erick Ybarra examines the historical evidence for the Petrine Primacy of universal authority in the Church as traditionally professed by the Catholic Church. Culminating ten years of patristic research, he meticulously examines the scriptural and historical objections which Eastern Orthodox dissenters have alleged to deny the existence of anything more than a mere 'primacy of honor' to Peter, Chief and Head of the Apostles, and his successors, the Bishops of Rome during the Church's first thousand years—and this despite the enormous amount of testimony our author gathers from the Fathers, saints, and seven ecumenical councils of the Church acknowledged as 'undivided' in faith by the Orthodox themselves. This volume will serve as an invaluable resource for those seeking to unravel the historical and theological difficulties presumed to negate papal supremacy and infallibility.

Our author calls to mind St. John Henry Newman's famous saying: 'To be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant.' Readers of this volume will be similarly reinforced in the conviction: To be deep in history is to cease to be Eastern Orthodox."

James Likoudis

*Author of* Ending the Byzantine Greek Schism

"From the First Vatican Council until the present day, the central topics of debate in the Catholic world have remained remarkably stable: how to articulate the relationship between faith and reason, as well as the Church and the world; what is the nature and agency of the Church? Today, in the midst of so many discussions about 'synodality,' more time should be devoted to a sound understanding of the primacy of the Pope of Rome. We should all thank Erick Ybarra for his presentation—at once thoroughly documented, reflectively insightful, and critically aware—of the topic of papal jurisdiction, as it has been articulated over the course of the centuries."

Matthew K. Minerd, Ph.D.

*Professor of Philosophy and Moral Theology,*
*Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius*

"This well-researched, well-balanced, forensic analysis of the Catholic theology of the papacy, and its rejection by Orthodox (and other) theologians is a major contribution to scholarship in this highly controversial area. By clarifying the methodological principles needed to apply to the primary sources covering the vast expanse of Church history regarding the papacy, the author succeeds in revisiting the intense, centuries-old scholarly debate of these same sources in a way that is original, comprehensive, and, most importantly, fair to all parties. It is an extraordinary achievement."

Fr. D. Vincent Twomey, S.V.D.

*Professor Emeritus and Recipient of the* Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice *Medal*

# THE PAPACY

# The Papacy

## Revisiting the Debate between Catholics and Orthodox

Erick Ybarra

Steubenville, Ohio
www.emmausroad.org

Emmaus Road Publishing
1468 Parkview Circle
Steubenville, Ohio 43952

©2022 Erick Ybarra
All rights reserved. Published 2022.
Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022936706

ISBN: 978-1-64585-221-6 hardcover | 978-1-64585-222-3 paperback |
978-1-64585-223-0 ebook

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from The Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition (Ignatius Edition) Copyright © 2006 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, second edition, copyright © 1995, Libreria Editrice Vaticana—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. Noted as "CCC" in the text.

Cover design and layout by Allison Merrick
Cover image *Saint Peter* by Studio of Sir Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1616/1618.

*To my wife,*

VICTORIA NICOLE YBARRA

# Contents


**Preface** xv

**Introduction** xix

**Chapter 1: Historical Sources** 1
- Scripture and Tradition 1
- *Consensus Patrum* 4
- Liturgy 7

**Chapter 2: Historical Methodology** 9
- What Counts for Admissible Evidence? 10
- Patristic Florilegia 15
- There Is No East or West 17
- Two Divergent Ecclesiologies? 22

**Chapter 3: Epistemological Considerations** 31

**Chapter 4: Primacy in the Orthodox Church** 53

**Chapter 5: Primacy in the Catholic Church** 71

**Chapter 6: Development of Doctrine** 89

**Chapter 7: The Papacy in Holy Scripture** 111

**Chapter 8: The Papacy in the Pre-Nicene Era** 127
- Clement I (96) 127
- St. Ignatius of Antioch (107–110) 128
- St. Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202) 128
- Pope St. Victor I: Asiatic Churches and Pascha (180) 131
- Pope St. Callistus I (218–222) 134
- St. Cyprian of Carthage (200–258) 136
- Rome: Apostolic Judge (250–313) 155
- Summary of Pre-Nicene Papacy 157

**Chapter 9: The Papacy and the Emergence of Imperial Councils** 159
- Constantinian Revolution (272–337) 159
- St. Athanasius and the Council of Sardica (343) 176
- Pope Liberius (352–366): The Papacy under Threat 188

Pope St. Damasus I (366–384): St. Peter at the Helm 194
St. Meletius of Antioch and the Communion of Rome (361–381) 199

**Chapter 10: The Papacy as Divinely Appointed Center of Unity for the Whole Episcopal Government** 219
St. Optatus of Milevis (fourth century) 219
St. Augustine and the Cathedra Petri (354–430) 230
Pope St. Siricius (384–399): Papal Decretals 235
Pope St. Boniface I (418–422): Petrine Head and Members 238

**Chapter 11: The Fifth-Century Papacy in North Africa** 243
Pelagianism and the African Councils (411–419) 243

**Chapter 12: The Papacy and Early Relations with the Byzantine East** 253
Pope St. Celestine I and the Council of Ephesus (431) 253
Excursus on Papal Supremacy 267
Pope St. Leo the Great (400–461) 280
The Council of Chalcedon (451) 295
Was the Tome of Leo Infallible? 320
Excursus on Papal Infallibility and the Episcopal College 335
Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch: All Sees of St. Peter? 349

**Chapter 13: The Primacies of Old and New Rome** 353

**Chapter 14: The Papacy and the Acacian Schism (484–519)** 373

**Chapter 15: The First See Is Judged by None** 423

**Chapter 16: The Papacy and Emperor Justinian** 431
The Council of Constantinople II (553) 435

**Chapter 17: The Papacy of St. Gregory the Great (594–604)** 455

**Chapter 18: Monothelitism and the Papacy (Lateran, 649)** 477

**Chapter 19: St. Maximus the Confessor and Papal Infallibility** 503

**Chapter 20: The Council of Constantinople (681) and the Tome of Pope St. Agatho** 519

**Chapter 21: The Development of Papal Failure and *Ex Cathedra* Conditioning** 533

Chapter 22: The Quinisext Council (691–692), Imperial Supremacy, and the Papacy 547

Chapter 23: Iconoclasm, Nicaea II (787), and the Papacy 553

Chapter 24: Photian Councils and the Papacy (859–880) 587

Chapter 25: Rome versus Constantinople (1054) 617

Chapter 26: Comprehensive Historical Analysis 629

Concluding Reflection 685

Appendix: Donation of Constantine and Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals 705

Works Cited 719

# Preface

St. John Henry Newman once said, "To be deep in history is to cease being a Protestant."[1] Many who have taken up the task of getting deep into Church history know this quote by experience. Ever since the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, countless souls have hiked the historical road of Church history, resulting in their becoming unprotestantized. The published literature recounting these journeys abounds. Such is common knowledge. Almost every time one hears this quote from Newman, it conveys the idea that history is devoid of the religion of Protestantism and is rather filled with Catholicism. To unprotestantize oneself is simply to become Catholic. This is especially so because Newman himself is famous for his conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism in 1845. Despite this trend, the famous citation can equally be relevant to those inquiring into other forms of Christianity that are rooted in the vast landscape of Church history. I refer primarily to the Eastern[2] and Oriental Orthodox churches.[3] These churches go back several centuries before Protestantism ever came about. And yet, they have existed for centuries without being in communion with the bishop of Rome. Hence, they are not Catholic. To be deep in history might be to cease being Protestant, but does it necessarily entail becoming Catholic? In fact, many of those in these Eastern churches would rather say, "To be deep in history is to cease to be a Roman Catholic!"

For the purposes of this book, when "Orthodox" are mentioned, this will refer to the Chalcedonian Eastern Orthodox Church or the historical churches of the Byzantine East. Certainly, Newman had been aware of the Eastern churches, for it was habitual for Anglican scholars during his time to refer to the Greek schism to show the supposed novelty of

---

[1] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878), 8.

[2] For a history of Eastern Orthodoxy, see John A. McGuckin, *The Eastern Orthodox Church: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).

[3] For a history of Oriental and Assyrian Orthodoxy, see Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), and Mar Bawai Soro, *The Church of the East: Apostolic & Orthodox* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014).

the absolutist papal claims. However, unlike Oxford historian William Palmer, Newman never gave too much of his academic research to investigating the Eastern Orthodox claims.[4] One might say that there is still left an open seat for someone of high academic stature to embark upon the *historical road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, to use the reference to Fr. Alexander Schmemann's book.[5] Thus, any new literature that seeks to pursue such an investigation is long overdue.

As the reader can guess, this entire book is a publication seeking to revisit the debate on the subject of the papacy between Catholics and Orthodox. Admittedly, when I commenced my studies, I had thought the case for Catholicism was far more compelling than any case for Orthodoxy could afford. As of now, I am thoroughly convinced that this debate is not concluded with a first round knockout for either side. I now sense that if Catholicism does win this debate, it only wins going the full distance of twelve rounds and by a remarkably close call. This is because the Byzantine[6] claims can be well supported by good historical evidence. If one studies only one side, perhaps only consulting Catholic apologists on the papacy, it can appear that Orthodoxy does not stand a chance in the debate. When one gives extra time to study the matter from both sides, one will learn that humble patience and plenty of rethinking is required. While striving for a resolution, I could never pretend that this book resolves every problem in this unfortunate separation between East and West. Even if no resolution is reached, the goal is that readers might have access to a modern publication which can provide a framework for the Catholic and Orthodox debate over papal primacy. Here, readers will be adequately informed of the strengths and weaknesses of both sides. The tone of the book leans far more to the role of the investigator than of the apologist. With all that said, I do attempt, especially in the *Comprehensive Historical Analysis* in chapter 26, to argue what would favor the Catholic side in the debate while also considering the significant arguments of Orthodoxy in the *Concluding Reflection*.

A brief word on the title, *The Papacy: Revisiting the Debate Between*

---

[4] See also his edition of Oxford historian William Palmer's *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church* (London: Kegan Paul Trench & Co., 1882).

[5] One might consider a good attempt being made by the late Frederick Joseph Kinsman, a former clergyman of the Church of England who converted to Catholicism but wrote about his dealings with the Byzantine claims; see his *Salve Mater* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920).

[6] When referring to the Eastern Orthodox side, I might switch from using either Eastern Orthodox or Byzantine since both can refer to the Greek East that severed its communion from the Latin West.

*Catholics and Orthodox*, for the purpose of clarity. It might be helpful to know that the medieval Latin word *papatia* ("papacy") simply comes from the smaller word *papa* ("pope"), which means "father." To the surprise of many, in early Christian times we see the term *papa* was not exclusively used to refer to the bishop of Rome. Long before we see it used for the bishop of Rome, we see the bishop of Carthage[7] as well as the archbishop of Alexandria[8] being referred to with this title.[9] They were the popes (fathers) of Carthage, Alexandria, and Rome. The idea is that these pastors were like fathers to their respective territories.

The concept goes back even to Sacred Scripture where St. Paul says that a bishop should, like a good father, know how to "manage his own household" so as to "care for God's Church" (1 Tim 3:5). The familial term *papa* became used to describe the role of a pastor of a church, and today it is used universally to describe the clergy in both Eastern and Western Christianity. The Orthodox say "Pope of Rome," which is akin to "Pope of Alexandria," a term still used today to describe Tawadros II over the Coptic Orthodox community.

Therefore, the highly developed and specific reference to "the papacy" in the title of this book is simply referring to the pastoral office of the bishop of Rome over the universal Church. I debated using "Roman Primacy" or "Primacy of Rome" as this might sound more sensible to Eastern ears, but that would then confuse inquirers who are not well versed in the historical terminology. And so, *The Papacy* it became. The word "revisiting" is also carefully chosen since it should be clear that we all stand on the shoulders of many great historians who have devoted their lives to this subject.

Lastly, the reader should be forewarned that the goal is not to provide an adequate treatment of the overall history of the schism between the East and West. For that, I would strongly recommend Fr. Aidan Nichols's *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism* (2010). The forthcoming material will be most helpful to those who have at least basic knowledge of the separation of the Latin and Greek churches and can invest their time into the topics that are specifically relevant to the arguments over ecclesiastical authority.

---

[7] John A. Faulkner, *Cyprian: The Churchman* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings and Graham, 1906), 46.

[8] Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004), ix.

[9] S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 249n65.

# Introduction

In both Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the concept of authority is right at the core of understanding divine Revelation and its communication to human beings. Both ecclesial bodies point to the source of all authority in the Lord Jesus Christ who said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age."[1] Universal dominion and supreme authority had been given to Christ, and with it he commands his Apostles to makes disciples of every creature on the earth. Therefore, Catholics and Orthodox both agree that it is by the very will of Christ that the Apostles and their successors carry this supreme authority[2] to convert every person to God through the Gospel. This mission involves teaching the doctrine and commands of Jesus Christ. Moreover, this is not just any sort of teaching but teaching with *divine* authority. Therefore, the Lord pronounced his own possession of universal dominion over all creation as the grounds for the commissioning of the Apostles. Their authority would be *his very own* authority in their possession.

To have authority is to have the power to command, direct, enforce, and oblige subjects to obedience. To have the divine authority of Jesus Christ himself would entail the possession of supreme and supernatural authority. And since the mission entrusted by the Lord to the apostolic Church is one of teaching doctrine, binding, loosing, disciplining wayward members, managing the household of God, and commanding men to obey the risen Lord, the Church has no lack in authority to so govern this Christian society. St. Paul is conscious of this when he commands the Corinthians to handle the scandalous members in their midst: "When you are assembled . . . *with the power of our Lord Jesus*, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh."[3] In other

[1] Matt 28:18–19 (emphasis added).

[2] Latin: *omnis potestas*; Greek: πᾶσα ἐξουσία.

[3] 1 Cor 5:4–5 (emphasis added).

words, since the command to preach the Gospel was issued by Christ the Lord, he also gave to the Apostles the authoritative capacity to effectively coerce and bind the consciences of men to adhere to the Gospel or else face dreadful consequences to the soul. In fact, it is no less than the authority of God mediated through the Church to humanity. This is precisely what Christ meant when he told the Apostles, "He who hears you *hears me*, he who rejects you *rejects me*, and he who rejects me *rejects him* who sent me."[4]

That means the authority of the Church is unchallengeable because the authority of Christ is unchallengeable. Therefore, "In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her *a share in his own infallibility*."[5] The gift of infallibility to the Church is logically implied by Christ endowing her with his own authority. These prerogatives were first given to the Apostles but then passed on to their successors: "In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them '*their own position of teaching authority*.'"[6]

It is important to stress here that the Church represents the kingdom of Christ on earth. While it is true that the King himself, as the humiliated Lamb of God, rules the universe from the disposition of his sacrificial Cross, and whose reign is founded on the infinite love of God for the world, it would be a tragic mistake to think that by this is meant that the Church is structured as a democracy of human opinion or run by popular vote. It would be a drastic mistake to think that the Church, following her Lord's command to be the least and servant of all, has therefore to allow herself to be governed by the spontaneous will of man. On the contrary, the Church is a kingdom ruled by the eternal Lord who requires unreserved and total obedience.

It stands to reason, therefore, that since the King has ordained human agents through which to reign over the Church, these agents would embody Christ's supreme authority in the world and particularly over the members of the Church. In our modern culture, this sort of structure may sound backward for the followers of Jesus Christ. But while this may be, the facts do not change, and for Catholics and Orthodox, this

---

[4] Luke 10:16 (emphasis added).

[5] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), §889 (emphasis added). Afterward, *CCC*.

[6] *CCC*, §77 (emphasis added).

idea should never even be brought up as a matter of debate,[7] though in many respects, it turns out to be such a matter in modern times. While there may be differences in how this kingdom-rule is applied in the government of the Church, the fundamental idea is one in which both communions have great similarity. This much is clear: authority is at the heart of both Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.[8]

As is obvious, the two churches are still very much divided about authority. Put very simply, the Eastern Orthodox reject the papal claims to universal jurisdiction and pontifical infallibility made by the bishops of Rome since at least the eleventh century, although, as we'll see, historical theologians recognize there was a divergence in ecclesiology brewing long before the outbreak of the schism symbolically dated to 1054.[9] The Orthodox reject the idea, codified at the First Vatican Council (1870), that "a primacy of jurisdiction over the whole church of God was *immediately and directly* promised to the blessed apostle Peter and conferred on him by Christ the Lord,"[10] and that, in "order . . . that the episcopal office should be one and undivided and that . . . the whole multitude of believers should be held together in the unity of faith and communion, He [Christ] set blessed Peter over the rest of the apostles and instituted in him the *permanent principle of both unities and their visible foundation.*"[11] Equally the same, they would reject that, to the bishop of Rome, "in blessed Peter, full power has been given by our Lord Jesus Christ to tend, rule and govern the universal church."[12] And still more they would reject that, "if anyone says that it is not according to the institution of Christ our Lord Himself, that is, by divine law, that St. Peter has *perpetual*

---

[7] In recent years, there has been a growing tendency in Orthodoxy to explain authority in different ways; see chapter 3 on epistemology.

[8] Fr. John Meyendorff, drawing from the nineteenth century Russian theologian A. S. Khomyakov, attempts to take a different approach in how to explain authority in the Christian community. In particular, authority is not external to the Church but "in the Church" and her vital experience with God. I personally do not see the substantial difference here. More on this in chapter 3, "Epistemological Considerations."

[9] I use 1054 more for its symbolic value. There is no single date which can mark a clean break from East and West, and 1054 was far more a local separation that eventually influenced the other Eastern patriarchs as years moved forward. Certainly, after the sack of Constantinople in 1204, both Latins and Greeks are conscious of a real schism between East and West.

[10] J. Clarkson et al., eds., *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973), 95.

[11] Clarkson, *The Church Teaches*, 94–95.

[12] Clarkson, *The Church Teaches*, 97.

*successors in the primacy over the whole Church* . . . let him be anathema."[13] Herein lies the crux of the debate.

According to renowned Orthodox theologian, Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon, who is otherwise strongly supportive of developing a theology of universal primacy in the Orthodox Church, a "study of modern Orthodox theology shows that the *disagreement* between Roman Catholics and Orthodox *concerning the place of Peter in the New Testament remains deep.*"[14] The "place of Peter" is at the very heart of the doctrine of the papacy, and there remains to be a strong disagreement between both communions. While there have been recent attempts by Orthodox theologians to resurrect older notions about St. Peter in Byzantine theology, the rejection of a Petrine primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church has been consistent in Eastern Orthodox thought. As Zizioulas further notes, the "idea of universal primacy in the Church has been rejected by the Orthodox, and this rejection *is deeply rooted in Orthodox consciousness.*"[15]

In light of this, I would not expect Orthodox inquirers to be totally without some skepticism about the papal dogmas. It has long been known that the way the primacy of the pope is exercised in today's Catholic Church has undergone drastic development in comparison with the manner of the first millennium, let alone the first few centuries of Christianity. It is, therefore, perfectly understandable for the contemporary Orthodox believer to raise pointed questions or even critical objections. None of this should be ignored. Despite the reached agreements in the recent ecumenical dialogues, it is still natural to question the origin of papal authority as defined by the First Vatican Council.[16] In fact, it is a just and good habit to question the origin of all claims of authority.

By way of illustration, when our Lord Jesus Christ began his ministry, we read that his listeners were "astonished at his teaching, for he taught

---

[13] Clarkson, *The Church Teaches*, 97.

[14] John Zizioulas, "Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology," in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Cardinal Walter Kasper (New York: The Newman Press, 2006), 244 (emphasis added).

[15] Zizioulas, "Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology," 242 (emphasis added). For more on the Orthodox understanding of primacy according to Zizioulas, particularly in reaction to the First Vatican Council as well as developments since then, see Maximos Vgenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 2013).

[16] For as much common ground has been found, no Catholic theologian has the authority to change the dogmatic definition in *Pastor Aeternus*.

them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."[17] Naturally, the priests and scribes of Israel asked him, "Tell us by what authority You do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority"?[18] When Jesus heard this, he responded by asking, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?"[19] When they could not give a definitive answer, the Lord declined to answer their question since he knew they were self-seeking.

Now, we all know that God was the origin of both the ministry of St. John the Baptist and the Lord, but there are a couple of ideas inherent in these exchanges which are pertinent to the overall import of this book. Notice how the Lord's teaching is marked by its *form of authority* and, secondly, the principal question is *where did that authority come from*? Does it come from men, or does it come from heaven? Is it divine, or is it from human beings? That is really what it boils down to. To make it more relevant, does the papal office, as understood by the Catholic Church, come from men or from heaven? If it comes from men, then critics of the papacy, such as the Eastern Orthodox Church, are correct to reject it. However, if it comes from heaven, then it would be incumbent upon those who believe in the Christian faith to begin to inquire into its claims, if not submit to them entirely. But how should we begin ascertaining whether the papacy is true or not? What does it take to prove or disprove the papacy? What qualifies as positive evidence? Whose voices from the past merit consideration? Are historical documents proving one way or another even necessary to begin with? What constitutes an authentic doctrinal development versus doctrinal corruption? These questions get us to the intention of this book.

Some might ask why another book *revisiting* the papacy when there are so many books written already written in its defense? This is true, and I am certainly indebted to the writings of those who went before. However, from my own personal dialogue with the Orthodox, I sense that a wave of new objections has arisen which perhaps calls for a slightly different method of approach. One cannot help but notice in the published literature the need to re-define terms, re-explain their respective views, and re-clarify the rules of interpretation. What is needed is a closer analysis of foundational issues surrounding *historical sources*, *methodology*, and the *rules governing interpretation*. The need for this is greater today than it was when these authors wrote in defense of the papacy. Another way of putting it is that while some of the older Catholic apologists wrote

[17] Mark 1:22.

[18] Luke 20:2.

[19] Luke 20:4.

in order to expose the evidence for the papacy from a myriad of proof texts, the hermeneutics of reading that evidence did not get the kind of treatment that would be required to answer today's Orthodox objections.

In the book, I get into far more detail as to what could be added in terms of needed evidence for the Catholic case for the papacy. *In a nutshell*, what I perceive is needed, as a minimum criterion for persuasive evidence, is a clear demonstration that Christ the Lord established an office of universal primacy, one which is organically essential to the government of the Church and thus divinely irreversible, non-transferable, and permanently fixed in the bishopric of the church of Rome, of which St. Peter and his lineal successors are ordained thereto. If we are getting a bird's eye view of the essence of what needs to be shown, that is precisely it. Even though this might, in its explicit expression, come a bit short of *perfectly* proving papal supremacy[20] and infallibility, it is more than reasonable to say that it strongly implies these two additions. And even if these two additions were not seen to be *necessarily implied*, the above criteria, if met, would be sufficient to exclude ecclesiological models borne by the Orthodox Church in favor of something more Roman Catholic in concept. In any case, this sort of evidence cannot be obtained simply by cutting and pasting a bunch of quotes from the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. Getting to the context of each author and the meaning intended is paramount to furnishing whether that citation can be used as a piece of evidence for the papacy.

Therefore, instead of merely producing a florilegium[21] of Church Fathers on the papacy, the beginning of this book will address *source material* and, more importantly, the *interpretive method* through which that material is understood. It is vitally important to know what sources are going to count as weight by both the Catholics and the Orthodox since later the book will make appeals to one or more of these sources. Without knowing the level of authority for a particular source, one will not fully perceive the strength being adduced by citing it. In addition, the historical method of how to read the data must be checked in order to understand why one side interprets in an opposing manner to another.

---

[20] I will tend to avoid using "papal supremacy" to describe the doctrine only because supremacy today carries connotations that seem to unnecessarily distort the true doctrine of the Catholic Church on the power and prerogative of the pope. Supremacy, at the end of the day, just means *the highest*, and thus the highest office of government in the hierarchical order of Christ's Church.

[21] A "florilegium" is a document with a long list of statements from the Church Fathers put together in order to demonstrate the truth of a certain theological point.

This is equally important since the manner of handling the data is what makes for the different beliefs of the two sides in this debate.

One of the more challenging aspects of writing a book on this is the burden of presenting the Orthodox perspective when the Orthodox Church *has not* spoken to the issue of the papacy by the authority of an ecumenical council. Consequently, there are a variety of views. There is still, nevertheless, something semi-official to look to. There are two documents[22] that were produced in the later part of the nineteenth century which do attempt to condemn the papacy, and which have been received by all the Orthodox worldwide. While not being decrees of ecumenical councils, there are sufficient grounds to believe these two documents are officially received by the Orthodox Church[23] and are the most authoritative statements of the Orthodox on the matter of the papacy. Unlike the Catholic Church, which has busied itself in making plenty of formally dogmatic statements, the Orthodox Church presents an exceedingly small data source, and this nearly forces one to appeal to Orthodoxy's most renowned theologians and clergymen, if not semi-official, to represent its tradition.[24]

After introducing *sources* (ch. 1) and *method* (ch. 2), I have a whole chapter devoted to *epistemological considerations* (ch. 3). A great deal of the differences between Catholics and Orthodox stem from their different epistemic paradigms. This chapter will serve as a sort of explanation for why disagreements between the two might persist, in hopes that something can be done to resolve the problem. The fourth and fifth chapters

[22] Orthodox Patriarchs, "Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848," *Fordham University*, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1848orthodoxencyclical.asp; "The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895: A Reply to the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, on Reunion." *Orthodox Christian Information Center*. August 1895. http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1895.aspx (among other websites).

[23] The encyclical of 1848 was signed by all the functioning patriarchs, including their respective synods, and was addressed to all Orthodox bishops and Christians worldwide. It was fully endorsed by Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow. The late Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko (1939–2015), former dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary and Professor of Dogmatic Theology, states "the encyclical letter of 1848 is considered to be the most authoritative doctrinal statement in modern Orthodox Church history" (Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith*, vol. 3, *Bible and Church History* [New York: The Department of Religious Education—The Orthodox Church in America], 1973); Metropolitan Timothy Ware calls it, as well as the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895, two of the chief doctrinal statements since the Council of Nicaea (787) in *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin, 1993), 203.

[24] In case the reader finds some disappointment or dissatisfaction with some of the cited representatives of the Orthodox Church, it should be kept in mind that unless such a readers are equipped with the capacity to speak for the universal Orthodox Church, they also represent their own opinions, like the persons cited throughout the book.

will be an extremely important treatment of the *Orthodox and Catholic positions* on the issue of papal primacy. From this data, the reader will be able to compare it with what will be shown from the historical survey. The next chapter deals with the critical question of doctrinal development and how this influences the research from both sides. From here the book launches into nineteen chapters of historical investigation from the sources going through the first millennium until the symbolic date of 1054, when the material differences of East and West are unmistakably recognizable, even if no formal break of East and West can be dated there. All of this ends with my own comprehensive historical analysis (ch. 26), which is a final assessment on where the evidence points, followed by a short concluding reflection and one appendix on the issue of forged documents. This progression has the element of a quite simple, organic, and natural flow. Hopefully, this will achieve the goal of shaping the debate between Catholics and Orthodox on the crucial subject of the papacy.

The reader may be curious as to what sources I am appealing to in order to present the Orthodox position(s) accurately. Since the Orthodox Church, as already said above, has never had an ecumenical council dealing with the papal primacy, except what, for them, are the unsuccessful "Robber Councils" of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439), one is left to do his best in drawing from his own recommended sources of (1) Tradition, (2) the chief doctors and saints from the ancient past, (3) canon law together with commentaries thereof by eminent men, (4) the decrees of accepted ecumenical councils, (5) documented beliefs of long standing, and finally (6) renowned theologians whose merits have proven over time. I certainly understand that there are differences between hierarchs over the subject of primacy amongst the churches, and I attempt to cover the different bases.

*Chapter One*

# Historical Sources

## Scripture and Tradition

When it comes to the process of locating sources, different people in the general population of the Christian world will have different views. If Baptists or atheists were reading this book, they might find themselves frustrated at how many presuppositions will be made concerning theism, Christianity, sacraments, apostolic succession, the visible oneness of the Church, the role of ecumenical councils, and the value of Tradition as it is passed on infallibly in the Church. Thankfully, Catholics and Orthodox share a common understanding of the *sources* of divine Revelation, which is essential for laying the groundwork of the debate.

Since it boils down to whether the papacy comes from heaven or not, the primary question is whether those sources of divine Revelation that both Catholics and Orthodox accept include sufficient data that demonstrates the truth of the papacy. These sources would be Sacred Scripture and the Holy Tradition of undivided Eastern and Western Catholicism throughout their shared heritage in the first millennium.[1] While Catholics have often been understood as saying Scripture itself is separate from the Church's Tradition, it should be stated that by saying Scripture

[1] Catholics and Orthodox share many common beliefs about Scripture and Tradition as sources of divine Revelation, but we do not here ignore the possible differences of interpretation and methodology.

and Tradition, the Catholic Church is only distinguishing the unwritten versus written forms of the apostolic deposit.[2]

Both are Tradition, in one sense. This mindset is shown in St. Cyril of Alexandria's letter to John of Antioch, which was read at the Council of Chalcedon. St. Cyril stated that we must speak of the faith "as we have received from the beginning from the divine Scriptures and from the tradition of the holy fathers."[3] Again, at the Council of Nicaea (787), the bishops say "Anathema to those who spurn the teachings of the holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church."[4] In line with this, Dr. George Bebis, Orthodox Professor of Patristics, wrote: "For the Orthodox Christian, there is one Tradition, the Tradition of the Church, incorporating the Scriptures and the teaching of the Fathers."[5] What may come as bit of a surprise is that when the papal claims began to be made in the primitive Church, the popes would appeal to the authority of Holy Scripture for the divine status of their position.[6]

Ecumenical councils have a preeminent role, in that, as St. Vincent of Lérins says, by "the decree and authority of a council, the rule of the Church's faith *may be settled*."[7] For Catholicism, the gift of infallible teaching is present and active in bishops when "gathered together in an ecumenical council... are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church, whose definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith."[8] Although understood in different ways, ecumenical

---

[2] Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* by Pope Paul VI (Nov. 18, 1965), §7–13, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

[3] Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), "Session 2," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3811.htm.

[4] Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787), "Session 1," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3819.htm.

[5] George Bebis, PhD, "Tradition in the Orthodox Church," *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*, accessed Sept. 17, 2021, https://www.goarch.org/-/tradition-in-the-orthodox-church.

[6] Matt 16:18–19; Luke 22:32; John 21:15–17.

[7] Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins*, in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lérins, John Cassian, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 11, eds. P. Schaff and H. Wace, trans. C. A. Heurtley (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 153 (emphasis added).

[8] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* by Pope Paul VI (1964), §25, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html; afterward *LG*.

councils are also infallible for the Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Timothy Ware writes that the "Greeks held that in matters of the faith the final decision rested not with the pope alone, but with a Council representing all the bishops of the Church."[9]

When the pro-unionist Byzantine emperor, Andronikos III, sent Barlaam the Calabrian to Pope Benedict XII in 1339, he spoke the following to the pope: "There is only one effective way of bringing about union: through the convocation of a general council to be held in the east. For to the Greeks anything determined by a general council *has the authority of law*."[10] According to the late Protopresbyter and Russian Orthodox dogmatician, Michael Pomazansky, "The highest organ of authority in the Church, and the highest authority in general, is a council of bishops: for a local church it is a council of its local bishops, and for the ecumenical council, a council of the bishops of the whole world."[11] Echoing this is Greek Orthodox theologian, Panagiotis Bratsiotis, who wrote: "The highest authority in the Church is, however, the ecumenical council composed of all the bishops which decides all questions concerning faith, liturgy, and Church law."[12] At the Council of Lateran (649), held under the presidency of Pope St. Martin I (649–655), it was stated:

> If anyone does not properly and truthfully admit whatever has been delivered and proclaimed to the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of God *according to the Fathers*, and hence, does not recognize by word and mind whatever *the Fathers* and the *Five venerable General Councils* declared, let him be anathema.[13]

In the twelfth decree of the Council of Jerusalem (1672), which the Orthodox consider to be an authoritative synod for the universal Church, the council spoke of the *Church Fathers* and the *ecumenical councils* as infallible instruments of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit:

---

[9] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 49.

[10] Timothy Ware, "Eastern Christendom," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 129 (emphasis added).

[11] Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition*, trans. and ed. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997), 254.

[12] Panagiotis Bratsiotis, *The Greek Orthodox Church* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 63.

[13] Citation from Msgr. George Agius, DD, JCD, *Tradition and the Church* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 2005), 213–14 (emphasis added).

> We believe that the Catholic Church is taught by the Holy Spirit. . . . The teaching of the Holy Spirit, however, doth not immediately, but through the holy Fathers and Leaders of the Catholic Church, illuminate the Church . . . so also the Church is taught indeed by the Life-giving Spirit, but through the medium of the holy Fathers and Doctors (whose rule is acknowledged to be the Holy and *Ecumenical Synods*; for we shall not cease to say this ten thousand times); and, therefore, not only are we persuaded, but do profess as true and undoubtedly certain, *that it is impossible for the Catholic Church to err*, or at all be deceived, or ever to choose falsehood instead of truth. For the All-holy Spirit continually operating through the holy Fathers and Leaders faithfully ministering, *delivereth the Church from error of every kind.*[14]

Despite existing disputes as to the manner and mode of an ecumenical council in the Orthodox Church, all Orthodox agree with Catholics that these councils, once duly recognized as ecumenical, are to be given the due submission of faith and unquestioning obedience. Therefore, if it is true that these councils provide evidence of the papacy, it should be received as true. In consequence to the honor and due submission owed to them by both Catholics and Orthodox, references to portions of ecumenical councils will qualify as one of the chief sources in the debate over the papacy.

## *Consensus Patrum*

Moreover, since both Scripture and Tradition were delivered through the Apostles unto the Church to be continuously handed down through apostolic succession, utterances from the Church Fathers, saints, and doctors of theology will serve as another source.[15] As St. Athanasius said:

[14] "Council of Jerusalem (1672)," in *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem*, trans. J. N. W. B. Robertson (London: Thomas Baker, 1899), 130–31 (emphasis added). One could not find a more straightforward claim to ecclesiastical infallibility. Here, the Orthodox Church is saying that she can never teach error.

[15] At times, "Fathers" can refer to saints, doctors, and bishops gathered together in councils, or it can refer just to the bishops who participated in local or ecumenical councils. At other times, "doctors" can also imply the Fathers of the Church, even if they were not ordained to the dignity of the episcopate, such as St. Justin the Martyr, St. Maximus the Confessor, and St. John of Damascus.

> Let us note that the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, was preached by the Apostles, and was preserved by the Fathers. On this was the Church founded; and if anyone departs from it, he neither is nor any longer ought to be called a Christian.[16]

For the early to medieval Church, the "*rule of the Fathers*" was understood as tremendously authoritative. This precise point is shown when St. Vincent de Lérins stated in his *Commonitorium*, "Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been *believed everywhere, always, by all.* For that is truly and in the strictest sense '*Catholic.*'"[17] What is the Catholic faith? That which has these three marks. In the history of Byzantium, the standard of interpreting the Sacred Scriptures according to the *consensus patrum* was nicely codified in the nineteenth canon of the Council of Trullo (692):

> And if any controversy in regard to Scripture shall have been raised, let them not interpret it otherwise than as the *lights and doctors of the Church* in their writings have expounded it, and in those let them glory rather than in composing things out of their own heads. . . . For through the doctrine of the aforesaid fathers, the people coming to the knowledge of what is good and desirable, as well as what is useless and to be rejected, will remodel their life for the better.[18]

About the Church's Tradition that is not explicitly from the text of Scripture, the idea of consensus among the Fathers was paramount for both East and West. At the Council of Constantinople (869–870), recognized as authoritative by Catholics, the first canon states:

> If we wish to proceed without offence along the true and royal road of divine justice, we must keep the declarations

[16] St. Athanasius, Four Letters to Serapion 1.28, in *Patrologiae cursus completes, series graeca* (*PG*) 26.522–676, quoted in *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1, trans. W. A. Jurgens (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 336 (emphasis added).

[17] Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins*, 132 (emphasis added).

[18] Council of Trullo (A.D. 692), "Canon 19," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3814.htm (emphasis added).

> and teachings of the holy fathers as if they were so many lamps which are always alight and illuminating our steps which are directed towards God. Therefore, considering and esteeming these *as a second word of God,* . . . we declare that we are preserving and maintaining the canons which have been entrusted to the holy, catholic and apostolic church by the holy and renowned apostles, *and by universal as well as local councils of orthodox* [bishops], *and even by any inspired father or teacher of the church.*[19]

One must take note of how highly respected and obeyed "any inspired father or teacher of the church" was considered to these bishops of old. Fr. Michael Pomazansky also summarizes this idea quite nicely:

> For guidance in questions of faith, for the correct understanding of Sacred Scripture, and in order to distinguish the authentic Tradition of the Church from false teachings, *we appeal to the works of the holy Fathers of the Church,* acknowledging that the unanimous agreement of all of the Fathers and teachers of the Church in teaching of the Faith is an *undoubted sign of truth.*[20]

When considering the consensus of the Fathers, therefore, we are interested in what doctrine they hold universally and together as if from one voice, and to consider it a *second word of God.* It is well known, though hotly disputed in medieval history, that individual Church Fathers do not enjoy the gift of infallibility, and so could err in their theological opinions.[21] However, the Catholic Church has always recognized that the teachings of the Fathers carried most weight when its content was agreed upon by all, in all places, from all times. The reasoning behind this is that the Holy Spirit inhabits the whole visible

[19] Fourth Council of Constantinople: 869–870, *Papal Encyclicals Online,* https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecumo8.htm (emphasis added).

[20] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology,* 37–38.

[21] Fr. Pomazansky continues: "In theology, attention is also given to certain private opinions of the holy Fathers or teachers of the Church on questions which have not been precisely defined and accepted by the whole Church. However, these opinions are not to be confused with dogmas" (*Orthodox Dogmatic Theology,* 38). In a footnote (22), he gives as an example, St. Gregory of Nyssa's supposed belief that hell is not everlasting, which is outlying from the majority of the Fathers. Therefore, what makes an appearance in the writings of only several Fathers should not be taken as true if an opposite proposition or belief is held by the majority.

Church of God and diffuses the saving knowledge of the truth to all the members of Christ's body. Therefore, where there is agreement on a universal level on a matter of doctrine, especially where this agreement has endured in time since the foundations of the Church in all places, the Fathers believed the Church could not be misled on this matter, since it would then call into question whether the Holy Spirit is fulfilling his office of leading the Church into all truth. If the Catholic doctrine of the papacy is true, then it should find itself somewhere in these sources.

## Liturgy

*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*, or "the law of prayer is the law of belief." The faith of the Church is expressed in her one voice with which she prays to God. Therefore, the liturgy is another source of the Church's Tradition. Besides the diverse liturgies that are prayed throughout Holy Mass or Divine Liturgy, there are the divine offices of prayer, poetry, and hymns in the books called the Menaion, Octoechos, Triodion, Pentecostarion, and the Horologion.[22] For Catholics, the main source of prayer life outside of Holy Mass is the Divine Office or breviary. These includes liturgical prayers, chants, and commemorations of feast days and saints throughout the year in the Orthodox Church.

Even though the content of these prayers may not be encoded into official dogmatic formulae, it is "held by the Church with an unmistakable inner conviction, an unruffled unanimity, *which is just as binding as an explicit formulation.*"[23] The law of prayer is the law of belief, indeed. Of course, not everything in these liturgical books is meant to be interpreted the same way, nor is each part of equal weight with dogmatic value. In particular, the poetry might be more verbose and exaggerative than what is held as a matter of theology. Lastly, while it is true that this wellspring of theology has not been the common source from which to gather data pertinent to the papacy, whatever could be drawn from it would certainly cause significant consideration if not unquestionable adherence. Of relevance to this subject, prominent Church Fathers who are venerated by the Catholic and Orthodox Church together speak to the credibility of their beliefs, and they serve as an authentication of the true Apostolic Tradition.

---

[22] Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 120–125.

[23] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 204 (emphasis added).

*Chapter Two*

# Historical Methodology

LOCATING THE AUTHENTIC SOURCES is one thing, but how to read them is the next step beyond that. This brings us to the question of methodology, or *hermeneutics*. What method or technique is employed when reading and interpreting the historical sources will certainly aid in exploring how the Orthodox and Catholics arrive at different conclusions on the matter of the papacy. Again, the Orthodox have officially rejected the doctrine which says that Christ divinely established an office of universal headship, which entails both jurisdiction and infallibility, over the whole Church. The Catholic Church has dogmatically embraced this. And yet, both claim equal share to the same sources for the doctrine of their respective communions. How can this be? What causes a fork in the road in interpreting the same data? Is there a contradiction in the data itself? It is these sorts of questions that this chapter seeks to address.

Before going further, I think it is apt to pause and distinguish between the science of theology as it is learned from the magisterium of the Church versus what can be known through a natural study of history. Most Catholic and Orthodox theologians would take issue with the idea that we know the content of the faith simply by diving into the historical record and reconstructing our findings. This is one of the fundamental problems with Protestant liberalism, which tends to put the findings of academia above the authoritative voice of the Church. This critique of academia is important. However, for the purposes of this book, a simple

reliance on the *viva voce* (living voice) of the Church, though ultimately nestled into the claims of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, will not suffice to decipher which Church's voice is to be trusted. In that case, diving into the historical record, while knowing the lights are dimmer in the process, in order to measure the strengths and weaknesses of Catholic and Orthodox claims is entirely appropriate as an academic exercise. From a Catholic perspective, this method is not sufficient when compared to the authoritative pronouncements of the Church. But for the sake of one who is studying these issues and must decide between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, a chance to get a fresh look at the historical record in order to gain insight in that decision is entirely appropriate and can even have a place in one's arrival at the truth.

## What Counts for Admissible Evidence?

The burden of proof in the debate on the papacy between Orthodox and Catholics rests squarely on the Catholic, since it is he who must come forward and present arguments in favor. While the Orthodox can just negate or call the arguments into question, the Catholic must argue that there is evidence sufficient to prove the papacy. There are, however, different kinds of evidence.[1]

Human beings do not always make decisions based upon the sort of evidence called "*beyond all reasonable doubt*." Otherwise, people would make less than 10 percent of the decisions they must make. This sort of evidence is the kind which provides so much certainty that X is true such that any doubt about X is manifestly unreasonable and absurd. Evidence such as this squelches the need for much labor in argumentation since the evidence itself does all the persuasive work. "*Clear and convincing*" evidence is the sort which has so much in favor of X that it achieves such a high probability that X is true rather than not. The "*preponderance*[2] *of the evidence*" is that sort which, in a balance of arguments for and against X, presents a high probability that X is true. *Substantial evidence* is the sort which provides a reasonable amount to believe X but leaves it possible that other conclusions might be reached just as well.

Taking from these general ideas, what evidence exists for the papacy? It is often the case that those who go into history looking for evidence

[1] For the types of evidence, I relied on Stephanie Jurkowski, "Burden of Proof," *Legal Information Institute*, Cornell Law School, last updated June 2017, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/burden_of_proof.

[2] Superior weight.

for the papacy are looking for the kind which is *beyond all reasonable doubt*. Sometimes, it seems nothing else will suffice. Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence, it is often said. Frequently, what is demanded is evidence of an absolute monarch, an infallible autocrat who is always shown to successfully put down all opposition, or a dictator who swiftly wins the assent of everyone with no difficulty. Anything less than this, for some, is not admissible evidence. I argue that the error in this thinking is in an exaggerated understanding of papal authority and therefore an unnatural expectation of admissible evidence.

From the standpoint of the Orthodox, it would be entirely unfair to suggest that the above criteria should be imposed upon the Catholic as the *sine qua non* description of what he must prove, and even less fair to require evidence beyond all reasonable doubt for this caricature. And this is due to the simple fact that the Orthodox themselves, as we saw,[3] unhesitatingly confess that ecumenical councils are vested with supreme and infallible authority. And yet, what Orthodox historical theologian exists to claim that the seven councils of the first millennium always successfully put down *all opposition*? Or which of these councils had perfectly won the assent of all people with no difficulty? Or which of these councils were thought to have been empowered to do anything it pleased whatsoever? Each of the ecumenical councils restricted itself to the authority of the apostolic deposit of Faith and the Tradition of the Church. If Catholics say a pope is restricted to the authority of the apostolic deposit and the Church's Tradition, we say nothing different than what the Orthodox say about councils. The decrees of councils were not always accepted and were often resisted by large portions of the Church. We might say that if "popes have been resisted, so have councils."[4]

What then? For an Orthodox to argue that the papacy is false because it had to bear resistance would effectively disprove their position on ecumenical councils as the supreme authority in the Church since they, too, bore resistance. There is, however, a growing divergence between what Catholics and Orthodox understand about authority and epistemology when it comes to councils, and that will be given due treatment in the following chapter on *Epistemological Considerations.*

What, then, should we be looking for in the first millennium if we are looking for real evidence of the papacy? It is the late Fr. Adrian

---

[3] See information about *ecumenical councils* in chapter 1.

[4] Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P., *Infallibility: A Paper Read Before the Society of St. Thomas of Canterbury* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1927), 78.

Fortescue's work[5] that inspires the layout of my basic answer to this question. He identified four elementary points to describe what the Catholic Church holds as being the rights of the popes,[6] and then he proceeded to show how those points are proven in the historical record through the methodology of patristic florilegia. Although offering more in the domain of historical method, I roughly follow these points while adding some modifications. I propose four points which, if proven, make for a sufficient case for the papacy against the Byzantine objections:

1. Christ constituted the government of his Church as a College of Apostles, within which exists governing members surrounding a single head, who was Peter.

2. The nature and extent of this headship includes supreme (highest) jurisdiction in both areas of doctrine and discipline over the universal Church. The conferring of this authority is testified in Holy Scripture when Christ issued to St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19), issued the command to pastor his flock (John 21:15–17), and pledged to pray on his behalf so that he might be a source of strength for his brethren (Luke 22:32).

3. Upon the completion of St. Peter's term of office, effected by his holy martyrdom in Rome, this office was left permanently stationed in the Roman church such that each lineal successor is endowed with the full prerogatives of primacy and authority that Christ conferred upon St. Peter. As such, the bishop of Rome is the principle of ecclesiastical unity, and anyone willfully outside of his communion forfeits their membership in the Church.

---

[5] Adrian Fortescue, *The Early Papacy: To the Synod of Chalcedon in 451*, fourth ed., ed. Alcuin Reid (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), chapter 3. A similar point was made by S. Herbert Scott in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 352.

[6] "What we believe about the rights of the Pope is contained in these four points: (1) The pope is the *chief bishop*, primate *and leader of the whole Church* of Christ on earth. (2) He has *episcopal jurisdiction over all* members of the Church. (3) To be a member of the Catholic Church, a man must be in *communion with the pope*. (4) The providential guidance of God will see to it that the pope shall *never commit the Church to error in any matter of religion*" (Fortescue, *The Early Papacy*, 39).

4. Because St. Peter's office is essential to the architecture of the Church's governmental institution, the papacy is *jure divino* (of divine institution) and will exist until the Second Coming of Christ. Just like the episcopate, the presbyterate, and the diaconate, no human power can nullify, abrogate, or decommission the papal government.

If these four points are proven, then the full scope of the Catholic doctrine on the papacy is true, and therefore the Eastern Orthodox claims are false.[7] If any one of these four points is false, then the Eastern Orthodox wins the debate over the papacy. All will depend on whether the historical record provides *clear and convincing* evidence, as well as a firm *preponderance* of the same, that the above four points were held by the Church of both East and West prior to the Greek and Latin schism (symbolically dated to 1054). It should also be said that not each and every piece of historical evidence should be required to exemplify the totality of the four points together. Often enough, the final production of evidence will have testimony that might support fewer than the four, but when added together with the rest of the evidence, cumulatively support the totality. Some might point out that there is still a great deal missing, such as the burden to prove the conditional *ex cathedra infallibility* of the Roman pontiff, that he alone can call and preside at ecumenical councils, that he has *ordinary and immediate* jurisdiction over the universal Church, whose judgment cannot be revised, and who cannot be judged by any ecclesiastical court. While the four points do not explicitly include all these specified elements, I am convinced these extra claims

[7] Refer to the statement I made in my introduction: "In a nutshell, what I perceive is needed, as a minimum criteria for persuasive evidence, is a clear demonstration that Christ the Lord established an office of universal primacy, one which is organically essential to the government of the Church, and thus divinely irreversible, non-transferable, and permanently fixed in the bishopric of the Church of Rome, of which St. Peter and his lineal successors are ordained thereto. If we are getting a bird's eye view of the essence of what needs to be shown, that is precisely it. Even though this might, in its explicit expression, come a bit short of perfectly proving Papal supremacy and infallibility, it is more than reasonable to say that it strongly implies these two additions. And even if these two additions were not seen to be necessarily implied, the above criteria, if met, would be sufficient to exclude ecclesiological models borne by the Orthodox Church in favor of something more Roman Catholic in concept. In any case, this sort of evidence can't be obtained simply by cutting and pasting a bunch of quotes from the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. Getting to the context of each author and the meaning intended is paramount to furnishing whether that citation can be used as a piece of evidence for the papacy."

are sufficiently implied by the same points, and so they are pregnant with the potential for doctrinal development.

If the Petrine-Roman constitution is divinely instituted, then it is etched into the essence or DNA of the Church's essential architecture. As such, only the Church that bears this model can be a candidate for the true Church. And since Catholicism is the only communion that teaches an essential Petrine organ of the nature expressed in these points, the more extravagant claims about the papacy are *sufficiently* implied by the former. Moreover, if the office of St. Peter, fixed in the Roman episcopate, is an ecclesial structure that was created by Jesus Christ by divine institution, then it is *ipso facto irreversible*, since what has "been instituted by Christ or by special divine Revelation is of its very nature unchangeable. No one ever suggested that an institution of divine right was either transitory or reversible."[8]

With such an intrinsic character, the papacy would be divinely fixed, much like the foundation rock of a building.[9] If such a case is made, it would only be a short distance from there to showing how pontifical infallibility and immediate universal jurisdiction are organically embedded into the detailed points as expressed. On the other hand, if these points cannot be proven by any means, then the papacy might still be true but not sufficiently demonstrable from the historical record. The evidence could be demoted to that of substantial evidence, or even no evidence at all. In the latter case, the Orthodox objections might then become substantial and possibly even win the debate with its own proofs.

---

[8] J. Michael Miller, *The Divine Right of the Papacy in Recent Ecumenical Theology*, Analecta Gregoriana, vol. 218, sectio B, series Facultatis Theologiae, 170 (Roma: Universitá Gregoriana Editrice, 1980), 57. This study was handed in as a doctoral dissertation at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

[9] This aspect of the argument is vital to consider when observing how some Eastern Orthodox Christians have conceded to the obvious divine institution of the Petrine-Roman primacy over all Churches but have minimized the nature of this primacy to the jurisdiction of a universal archbishop, having the limited rights and prerogatives that a regional archbishop would have over the bishops underneath him. The Orthodox who go this far in recognizing the divine calling of the Petrine-Roman institution undermine their position simply by the fact that they believe this institution has been decommissioned by human power for at least one thousand years now. But what is *jure divino* cannot be diminished by human power.

## Patristic Florilegia

A florilegium[10] consists of a document that gathers a collection of citations from an author's work. This method of literature reaches back to classical antiquity by Greek writers and was continued in Byzantine literature.[11] Eastern theologians found it useful in "compiling collections of select passages taken from Scripture, the writings of the Fathers, or the acts of Church councils, and utilizing them for various religious purposes."[12] One relevant purpose was to produce a document which refutes a particular heresy by proving a particular position as the historic orthodoxy of the Bible and the Church Fathers.[13] Saints and doctors were indebted to this form of theological argumentation. Often enough, a full florilegium of the Fathers was meant to simply serve as a demonstration of the truth to be accepted without the need of "rational argumentation," as if they were presupposed to be infallible.[14]

One need only see how patristic florilegium was relied on during the Monothelite controversy by St. Maximus the Confessor at the Lateran Council (649). This was also a habit of the Latin West as can be seen from Pope St. Agatho's letter to the Sixth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople (681), which contained a patristic florilegium of Church Fathers proving two wills in Christ, much the same as St. Maximus's.[15] Many theologians heavily relied on such florilegia as the source of their arguments against opponents, and so for centuries, both Greeks and Latins would take up this method,[16] even so far as the Council of Florence (1439–1445). One can see how powerful a patristic florilegium can be from the observations taken by Basil Bessarion and George Scholarius, both prominent members of the Greek delegation at the Council of Florence, who were convinced of the Latin position for the *Filioque* (the

[10] Literally meaning "a gathering of flowers." See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 511.

[11] Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 126; Fr. Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35.

[12] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 127.

[13] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 128, 137–39.

[14] Fr. Richard Price, "Fathers and the Church Councils," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. Kenneth R. Parry (The Atrium: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015), 409.

[15] Even before this, when St. Maximus defended Rome's adherence to the *Filioque* doctrine, he had said that the Latins had produced numerous proofs by citations from the Latin fathers, including St. Cyril of Alexandria; see A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

[16] The Council of Nicaea (787) included a patristic florilegia for image veneration.

teaching that the Spirit has his personal being and subsistence eternally from both Father and Son) based upon the sheer preponderance of evidence from the Fathers.[17]

What is particularly noteworthy is this common conception of how the Fathers of the Church could not contradict each other. In the mind of these men, patristic contradiction was unthinkable. It was simply not fathomable that there would be a disagreement among the Holy Fathers. In fact, after the Council of Florence, the new patriarch of Constantinople, Metrophanes of Cyzicus, had justified both the Council of Florence and the insertion of the pope's name into the diptychs "on the grounds that the Latins Saints, accepted as such also by the Greeks, had always held what the Latin Church then believed."[18] According to Judith Herrin, a renowned historian of Byzantine and Late Antique Studies, the Council of Florence achieved its success through a recognition that the Fathers of both East and West were in support of the Latin apologists: "Agreement was reached on the grounds that all saints are inspired by the same Holy Spirit, *whether they are western or eastern*, and their faith must be the same in substance even if it is expressed differently in Latin and Greek."[19] The internal logic is that communion should be had with those who held to what the Fathers taught, whether of the East or West.

While the saints and doctors of the Church relied on achieving the *consensus patrum* through this method of producing patristic florilegia, its limitations can be quickly seen in that one is merely getting a compilation of quotes possibly taken out of their original context. While the citations themselves might be sufficient to show the correct and proper meaning, there were times when the original meaning may have been sacrificed for the sake of argument. A distinction should also be drawn between what *some* Fathers say versus what the *majority* say. This can make the difference between private opinion and universal dogma. What might be a theologoumenon (theological opinion) should not be respected as if it were an infallible decree. In our modern era, papal apologists have continued to use the method of florilegia in order to prove the doctrine of the papacy, and it can often be convincing at first glance.

[17] Fr. John Erickson, "*Filioque* and the Fathers at the Council of Florence," in *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 159.

[18] Joseph Gill, S.J., *The Council of Florence* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 351. Notice how the Greek acceptance of the Latin Church Fathers as saints bore the force of persuasion in whether *Filioque* was acceptable doctrine. It stands to reason, therefore, that the teaching of the Latin saints on the papacy should carry the same force.

[19] Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: A Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 307.

In many cases, the true meaning of the quote is faithfully transmitted just by its sheer clarity. But due to both the need for context and the emergence of more critical scholarship, a change in method has occurred in that modern scholars no longer assume harmony and continuity between one Church Father and council or another.

In this day and age, scholars subject historical data to a more critical lens, and as a result, the punch force that patristic florilegia had in the past is now weakened. In fact, as ironic as it is, some would even discredit an opponent for attempting to produce a patristic florilegium on the papacy. I use the word *irony* since patristic florilegia had been the cause of the dogmatic decrees of many of the ecumenical councils, which are unconditionally submitted to by both Orthodox and Catholics today. If the great ecumenical councils could submit themselves to patristic citations, then it would seem fitting we should try to do the same today. To automatically ignore the potency of patristic quotes can insult the Church Fathers who held such an objective method in reverence.

Therefore, instead of automatically waving away citations from the Church Fathers, it would be far better to simply verify the historical context to see if the citation genuinely supports the argument being presented. If the text is spurious or proves to have a different authorial intent than the one being given by the Catholic apologist, then it can be set aside. Moreover, if we were to imitate the saints and doctors of the Church, we will study critical scholarship all the while still devoting our best efforts to seeing the harmony between the Fathers who only appear to contradict one another.

## There Is No East or West

When our Lord Jesus Christ completed his earthly ministry and ascended to be enthroned at the right hand of God, he poured out the Holy Spirit to the Apostles in Jerusalem and worked miracles through them. One of those miracles was showing how Gentiles should be included into the New Covenant through baptism, and not by circumcision as the Mosaic Law had required. Nor were they to be forced to follow all the rest of the Mosaic legislation except its fulfillment, the Law of Christ.[20] This development caused an early rift in the church of Jerusalem because some Christian Jews, particularly from the "party of the

[20] 1 Cor 9:20–21.

Pharisees,"[21] could not reconcile the clear passages of the Old Testament which mandated circumcision as a necessary sign of one's participation in the covenant of Abraham. As is known, St. Paul answered this in his famous epistles to the churches of Rome, Galatia, Ephesus, and Philippi. Because Christ is the New Adam and because we are all one body in him, the ethnic differences of the old humanity between Jews and Gentiles no longer exist from the standpoint of their identity in Christ.[22] Perhaps the clearest statement to this effect comes from a portion of St. Paul's epistle to the churches of Galatia: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; *for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"[23]

What violence to reason is done if we further infer from this prior apostolic resolution that there is *no East or West*, for both are one in Christ Jesus? Often enough, Eastern Orthodox Christians might speak of the Eastern Fathers as "theirs" while the Western Fathers belong to "Roman Catholics." Likewise, Catholics might also make the same mistake. But if the Creed is correct in saying that the Church is "one," then for both Catholics and Orthodox, all the saints and Fathers of the Church must belong to the same Church. Thus, the Latin saints are, for the Orthodox, just as much part of their patrimony as is the Eastern saints. The same goes for the Catholic concerning the Greek saints. Now, I do not pretend to suggest there is no legitimate place for the difference in culture, language, theological orientation, liturgical custom, and spiritual method. However, I am here saying that, so far as being "in Christ" is concerned, and as far as representing the truth is concerned, there is no separation between Latins or Greeks, Easterners or Westerners, nor any other divisions caused by cultural or geographical gaps. If they are saints, they are voices of the one true Church, no matter how far East or West they came from.

If the Orthodox are correct in their history, then the Latin West was orthodox until it broke away from the Eastern patriarchs. That still must mean that prior to said breakage, the Latin West was in communion with the Eastern patriarchs, and as such, the saints and doctors of that era of the Latin West are members and pillars of the contemporary Eastern Orthodox Church. Likewise, if the Catholics are correct in their own history, then the Greek East was orthodox (right-believing) until they broke

[21] Acts 15:5.

[22] Eph 2:14–18.

[23] Gal 3:27–28.

away from the Apostolic See. That still must mean that prior to this separation, the Greek East was in communion with the Apostolic See, and so the Catholic Church today must embrace all that is possible from the saints and doctors of the East during that era.

An example of a practical consequence of this would be that the Orthodox cannot try to distance themselves from the writings of Pope St. Leo the Great, whom nearly all scholars recognize as having claimed that he was the "divinely commissioned ruler of the church,"[24] simply because he was not a Greek Father. Much to the contrary, the Orthodox should figure out just how St. Leo can be absorbed into their theological heritage since Roman Catholicism was not in existence, according to the Orthodox, until the schism in the second millennium. In other words, from the perspective of the Orthodox, St. Leo is their guy, not the Catholics'. Likewise, the Catholic cannot distance himself from Eastern saints for the same reason. Both East and West, prior to the schism,[25] were undivided, and their saints and Fathers are all to be upheld.

This unity in Christ, contrary to Protestant ecclesiology, consists in a share in one faith.[26] This is precisely why certain Greeks could not help but embrace the *Filioque* at the Council of Florence. The Greek Orthodox Basil Bessarion, later made cardinal once he converted to the Catholic Church, had said the following concerning his perception of the Latin presentation at the Council of Florence:

> It was not the syllogisms or the cogency of proofs or the force of arguments that led me to believe . . . but the *plain words of the doctors*. For I judged that the holy fathers, speaking as they did in the Holy Spirit, *could not have departed from the truth.*[27]

Here we see, once again, the supposed infallibility of the Church Fathers. Interestingly enough, Mark of Ephesus, the one Greek delegate at the Council of Florence who rejected its decrees, urged that the saints could err in the faith despite many of his fellow Greeks begging him not

[24] Bronwen Neil, *Leo the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 40.

[25] I here exclude the exception of the *lesser* Eastern churches (Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopian, Armenian, etc.).

[26] Eph 4:5.

[27] *De Spiritus Sancti processione ad Alexium Lascarin Philanthropinum*, ed. E. Candal (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1961) 40.11–41.5; see trans. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 159.

to concede this.[28] For Bessarion, if the Council of Florence were to concede to the idea that the Latin Fathers were in err, this would render void the entire Christian religion. He further stated: "A few said [i.e., Mark of Ephesus and company] that the Latin saints are in error; *but that would mean the end of the faith.*"[29] In other words, since the Latin saints were formed by one and the same Holy Spirit, they must not be substantially divergent from the Eastern saints. Either both are equally credible or none of them are, and the latter is fatal to Christianity. In further support of this hermeneutical principle of equally revering the doctrine of the Fathers of both East and West as unquestionably true, former dean of St. Vladimir Theological Seminary and professor of canon law and Church history, Fr. John Erickson, refers to Bessarion's citation of St. John of Damascus in his *Oratio Dogmatica De Unione*:

> The saints must mutually agree. They cannot oppose and contradict each other, for the power and illumination of the same one Spirit have brought it about that their opinion in matters pertaining to the faith is one and the same.[30]

Another witness to this principle was fellow Greek delegate at Florence Georgios Kourtesios Scholarios (1400–1473),[31] who wrote concerning the Latin arguments:

> They [Latins] brought forward from the common fathers of the Church the six most renowned in dignity, wisdom, and struggles for the faith . . . as witnesses of their doctrine, each of whom must be judged the equal of all the men in the

[28] "Responsio," in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 15, ed. L. Petit (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1927), 72. Source obtained from Fr. Christiaan Kappes, "Mark of Ephesus, the Council of Florence, and the Roman Primacy," in *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*, vol. 1, ed. John Chryssavgis (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 123.

[29] Fr. Joseph Gill, S.J., "The Sincerity of Bessarion the Unionist," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 26, part 2 (Oct. 1975): 389 (emphasis added).

[30] Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 167; Fr. Erickson further notes that this hermeneutical principle was accepted by all the Greeks at Florence. In another place, St. John of Damascus says that the Fathers must be reconciled even if they aren't apparently so: "They are patristic and we will not contravene. But we must prove the holy Fathers and teachers to be in agreement with each other. And [we must prove the holy Fathers and teachers to be] neither in contradiction to themselves not at all, not fighting one another;" see George Metallidis, "Theology and Gnoseology and the Formulation of Doctrine in St. John Damascene," in *Studia Patristica* 42 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 344.

[31] He later took the name Gennadius.

> world, and those not just incidentally and casually but as if they were for us judges of the present disputes. . . . Besides, they put forward others from the common fathers, those of the East I mean, adorned with an equal wisdom and honor. . . . Nor shall we say that the doctors are mutually contradictory, *for this is to introduce complete confusion and to deny the whole of the faith.*[32]

Here, again, it was unfathomable that Eastern or Western Saints would be contradictory to one another or, even more so, contradictory to the faith. Whether the Latins were correct at Florence or not, the idea being drawn here is about methodology. The Greeks maintained an equal reverence for the teaching of the Latin Fathers as much as for the Greek Fathers, and both were equally indispensable for authentically representing the apostolic deposit of faith. As Bessarion had shown in his citation of St. John of Damascus, it was axiomatic for the Church Fathers to mutually agree on one and the same faith, and contradiction was simply unthinkable. This is altogether crucial for the present book since in modern debates between the Orthodox and Catholics, it is quite common to hear from the Orthodox side, "Well, the East rejected it." This objection illustrates the mistake of thinking that the patristic East is all that the contemporary Orthodox Church must absorb. It is incumbent upon the Orthodox to accept both East and West, since they were all part of one Church and fed by one Holy Spirit.

As was already said, for centuries the Orthodox Church has considered the Catholic Church to be in both heresy and schism. For them, the heretical sect[33] called "Roman Catholicism" does not exist before the schism symbolically dated to 1054 and onward. Since the Orthodox Church takes for herself the ecclesial territory of both the undivided West as well as East, then we *should not* see evidence of Roman Catholic beliefs before the schism in the second millennium in either East or West. The Greeks, therefore, would have not paid any serious consideration to whether men such as St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) or St. Bonaventure (1221–1274) taught papal supremacy or the *Filioque*, since these men exist

[32] Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 159; Fr. Erickson provides his own explanation as to whether this hermeneutical principle is without due criticism due to some of the spurious texts that went into the proceedings at Florence; see Erickson, "*Filioque* and the Fathers at the Council of Florence," 157–69.

[33] The Patriarchs compared Roman Catholicism to Arianism, e.g., "Encyclical of the Patriarchs, 1848," §4.

during the time when the East and West were already separated. However, the Latin Fathers who existed during the peace of East and West, and more especially those Latin Fathers who are canonically venerated as saints in the current Orthodox services, are to be given full consideration. The same rule applies to Catholicism, if the Eastern Fathers were to show themselves overtly contradictory to Catholic doctrines.

## Two Divergent Ecclesiologies?

And yet, despite the foregoing, many historical theologians of the modern day, equipped with a more objective or critical method, have recognized that the Latin West and Greek East had long existed in communion *whilst they already had contradictory beliefs on matters pertinent to the faith such as ecclesiology and the structure of the Church.* It is held that since long before the formal and open separation of the Latins and the Greeks occurred, there was already a gradual estrangement.[34] French Dominican theologian, Yves Congar (1904–1995), perhaps one of the most influential scholars in Catholic theology in the twentieth century, argues that *two contrary theories* were already operative in the pre-schism East and West that would culminate centuries later into the reality of the schism.[35] Quoting from French historian Monsignor Pierre Batiffol, Fr. Congar sees the differing theories of ecclesiology summed up in the following:

> I believe that the East had a very poor conception of the Roman primacy. *The East did not see in it what Rome herself saw and what the West saw in Rome,* that is to say, a continuation of the primacy of St. Peter. The Bishop of Rome was more than the successor of Peter on his cathedra, he was Peter perpetuated, invested with Peter's responsibility and power. The East never understood this perpetuity. St. Basil ignored it, as did St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom. In the writings of the great Eastern Fathers, the authority of the Bishop of Rome is an authority of singular grandeur, but in these writings it is not considered so by divine right. *It is regrettable that so fundamental an*

[34] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 52.

[35] Yves Congar, O.P., *After Nine Hundred Years: The Background of the Schism Between the Eastern and Western Churches* (Chevetogne: Fordham University Press, 1959), 57–73.

> *issue was not settled by full discussion and by an ecumenical council during the centuries when there was still union.*[36]

Catholic historian Monsignor Louis Duchesne (1843–1922) saw a progressive tension building up between East and West, first starting with "beautiful, smooth, and salutary union" in the earliest centuries unto signs of "roughness which become more and more evident; soon sharp edges and fissures arise, until at last we come to the great rupture of the eleventh century."[37] The late Catholic scholar Fr. Robert Eno summarizes a monumental work by the erudite Jesuit Fr. Wilhelm De Vries:

> In the Roman view, its own decision was the definitive one: the council was not able to debate it but simply to ratify it. For the East, the council took into account the Roman decision but debated the issues on its own and came to its own judgment. The decision of the council was the definitive one. *Rome and the more collegial East each went on council after council with its own essentially different view.*[38]

The late Orthodox theologian Fr. Alexander Schmemann gets at this by saying the Roman view of the papal office "sharply contradicted the idea of the structure of the Church which the whole East had always accepted. In other words, in the fifth and sixth centuries, we see within the Church *two ecclesiologies—two doctrines of the Church*—which were not only distinct *but in fact mutually exclusive.*"[39] Mutually exclusive beliefs within the unified Church is an unmistakable claim to a sharp dichotomy between East and West. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, a highly influential bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church and a prolific theologian, echoes the above citations:

---

[36] Congar, *After Nine Hundred Years*, 62 (emphasis added). One Anglican historian cites Batiffol, "It is clear that this [Roman] primacy is an article on which the Easterns have to be humoured. They make much of it *only when they want it*;" see Beresford Kidd, *The Roman Primacy: To A.D. 461* (London: The MacMillan Publishing Company, 1936), 116.

[37] Louis Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1907), 109.

[38] Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1990), 115 (emphasis added).

[39] Fr. Alexander Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963), 239–40.

> The ecclesiological differences between Rome and Constantinople were caused by the gradual development *throughout the period of the ecumenical councils*. . . . The pope began to be seen as the head of the ecumenical Church, with jurisdiction throughout the entire world. *These were completely different ecclesiological models.*[40]

Fr. John Meyendorff, perhaps the greatest Orthodox historian of the twentieth century to write upon the issue of the papacy, agrees with the above: "It is undeniable that as a result of these differences *two opposing ecclesiologies began to take shape.*"[41] He says elsewhere that the divergence is the result of a "progressive estrangement, which coincided with the equally progressive growth of papal authority," and as early as "the fourth century."[42] Dr. A. Edward Siecienski, Byzantine historian and, perhaps, the greatest English pen in contemporary scholarship on the schism between the Latins and Greeks, gives no hesitation in blatantly undercutting the antique assumption of consensus among the Fathers on this matter of the papal office:

> Simply put, if ecumenists are bedeviled by the attempt to discern the *consensus patrum* on papal authority it is because *there never was one*. . . . In fact, it may be that the *co-existence of so many divergent views* in the era of the "undivided Church" offers the most promise for future dialogue, as it allows both Catholic and Orthodox to acknowledge the patristic roots of the other's approach. Both claim that their understandings of the primacy are grounded in the writings of the fathers. *Objectively speaking, both are correct, even if neither is completely right.*[43]

---

[40] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 108–09.

[41] John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), 37; see also "Two Ideas of Primacy" in *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, by Fr. John Meyendorff (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 99.

[42] John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 66–67 (emphasis added).

[43] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 142 (emphasis added).

If we are informed by the most recent scholarship, how is it that students of history can observe from the sources whether the papacy is true or false? Is the Catholic interpretation of papal primacy correct? Is the Orthodox interpretation correct? We might first look to the Church Fathers and manifest statements of the ecumenical councils. However, if Dr. Siecienski is right, and there was no *consensus patrum* on the primacy of the pope at all, but rather only divergent views from each other, then such a task can seem impossible to achieve. Admittedly, with a presupposition of patristic consensus as held by the Greeks and Latins at Florence (which affirmed the impossibility of disagreement between Fathers) we are bound for a short ride in historical study. For in seeking to outline the Fathers who taught the papacy, there can be put, side-by-side, Fathers who contradicted the papacy, and those whose testimony bear witness to it. And if we were to initially deny the possibility of disagreement amongst the Fathers, claiming each has indispensable value, only to later find actual disagreements, this would certainly paralyze the investigation. In that case, there would be no way to determine which side of the patristics is the correct one. Consequently, this would also be detrimental to both the Catholic and the Orthodox seeking to prove their respective positions from these same sources. A pox on both our houses, indeed. Thankfully, the situation is not so grim.

The most reasonable alternative might be to fall back upon a healthy use of the Vincentian, or Lérinian canon, originating from St. Vincent de Lérins (ca. 445). Seek that which has been held by *everyone, everywhere, at all times.* Painfully, however, one must admit that this methodology, simply followed, also ends up finding itself in a situation of having to pick between two or more contradictory views from the Church Fathers. For this reason, the Vincentian canon came under some suspicion by even the renowned Fr. George Florovsky (1893–1979), one of Orthodoxy's most influential theologians in the twentieth century. Fr. Florovsky asked if "all" should be literally asked what the truth is before knowing what the truth is, then this would include the weak and poor in faith. An undefined "all" in the Vincentian canon makes for poor empirical criteria. If we exclude those who are prone to waver or doubt, then we have come short of requiring "all." Moreover, "very often the measure of truth is the witness of the minority."[44] If the minority carries the truth at a given time, how does the standard of consulting what "all" believe at that time

[44] Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, vol. 1 (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), 51.

help anyone? St. John Henry Newman, while he was still Anglican, made a note of clarification on this Vincentian methodology of seeking the faith of the early Church:

> The Rule of Vincent is not of a mathematical or demonstrative character, but moral, and requires practical judgment and good sense to apply it. For instance: what is meant by being "taught always"? Does it mean in every century, or every year, or every month? Does "everywhere" mean in every country, or in every diocese? And does "the Consent of Fathers" require us to produce the direct testimony of every one of them? How many Fathers, how many places, how many instances constitute a fulfillment of the test proposed? It is, then, from the nature of the case, a condition which never can be satisfied as fully as it might have been; it admits of various and unequal application in various instances.[45]

Newman adds from this that "this unmanageableness [of Vincent's canon] is a reason against Vincent's rule being the divinely appointed instrument by which Revelation is to be brought home to individuals.... If this rule is all that is given us for the interpretation of Scripture or of Antiquity, it is a '*lucus à non lucendo*,' [i.e., an explanation that fails to help]."[46] Who can deny the glaring impracticality of trying to get a consensus of what every Church Father or baptized Christian believed from every time and space going back to the Apostles? When the Anglican scholars at Oxford would appeal to St. Vincent's method as a way to disprove the authenticity of Roman Catholic doctrines (e.g., where are relics and indulgences in the early Church?), Newman was quick to point out to his fellow Tractarians that some of the doctrines which they unquestionably uphold with dogmatic value do not pass the test of St. Vincent, such as the precise formulations of Trinitarian doctrine, original sin, and others which the Church of England never doubted.[47]

Newman was therefore led to construct his thesis on doctrinal

[45] John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, and J. H. Parker Oxford, 1837), 68–69.

[46] This comes from a footnote to the 1877 edition of the above *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church* (57n7), citation taken from Thomas G. Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 144n13.

[47] Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 54–55.

development in order to explain the continuity of divine Revelation from Christ and the Apostles down through history up to his time, as well as a *living voice*, an infallible teaching office, that could enter disputes and consolidate a right position. But he need not go any further than St. Vincent's *Commonitorium* for that since the latter himself gives precisely the criteria for such development. More on this will be explained below when treating the theory of doctrinal development in both Orthodoxy and Catholicism. In this case, Newman was attempting to show that a living voice of magisterium would be needed in order to stand as an authoritative witness to what is the genuine content of the divine Revelation. Since Anglicanism posited no such living voice, this predicament served as a launchpad for an argument on behalf of apostolic succession and an infallible magisterium.

I would argue that, in some sense, albeit to a lesser degree, the decision between Eastern Orthodoxy or Catholicism is determined by one of two options: either a frozen indecisiveness as to which tradition is right between the two or an infallible magisterium which claims for itself the authority to decide on the matter.[48] To make matters even more difficult, we saw that Fr. John Meyendorff and other Orthodox scholars were already seeing a divergence on ecclesiology between East and West going back to the fourth century, and some scholars have seen the divergence much earlier than that.[49] In fact, we often speak of the schism between East and West occurring in 1054 and following, but the documentary evidence is far more complex than this. Some already know of the Nestorian split in 431, which led to the Assyrian Church of the East (i.e., Persian Church), as well as the Coptic/Syriac split in 451, which formed the Miaphysite churches that still exits to this day. Aside from that, there were spans of time where the East was already out of communion with Rome throughout the first millennium. On this point, I would be remiss if I did not share the work of Fr. Louis Duchesne who had the most extraordinary observations with regard to the pre-schism tensions already existing between East and West. The Great Schism between the

[48] A third option is to try to average out the truth from all the competing voices of antiquity, but that could require a lifetime of research. It would be inching close to a Protestant authority paradigm if we say that each individual decides what sounds best according to his own interpretation.

[49] The late Archbishop Stylianos Harkianakis claimed that the unlawful usurpation of authority the Roman bishop claimed over other bishops was "undisguised" in Pope Victor (192). "It was at this point that the differentiation between the Catholic Church of the West from that of the East began;" see Stylianos Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology*, trans. Philip Kariatlis (Sydney: St. Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2008), 146.

Latins and Greeks did not happen from one bad fight in the eleventh century. That would defy sociological common sense. Rather, something borne by the two sides was already brewing for a long time, which eventually led to the separation. Something was habitual in the West and the East which made the eventual rupture inevitable.

As a matter of approximate history, Fr. Duchesne calculates the amount of time where East and West already had ruptures in communion between the time of Constantine's transition to Byzantium, later named Constantinople (323), and the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (787).[50] Ironically enough, this is the time most perceive as the "golden era" of the "undivided church." Summarizing his calculations, Fr. Duchesne begins with the fourth century, from the Council of Sardica (343) which had defended St. Athanasius from the Arians, until the episcopate of St. John Chrysostom (343–398), counting a total of *fifty-five years* where the great Sees of Constantinople and Antioch were severed from Roman communion. Into the fifth century, on account of the dispute over St. John Chrysostom (404–415), he counts *eleven years*. From 484 to 519, on account of Acacius and the *Henotikon* of the Emperor Zeno, he counts *thirty-five years* when all the Eastern sees had been out of visible communion with Rome. On account of the Monothelite controversy, the Eastern sees were out of communion with Rome for *forty-one years*, he records. Finally, on account of the iconoclastic controversy, Fr. Duchesne counts *sixty-one years* during which the East had lacked communion with Rome.[51] This totals 203 years of a severance in communion between Rome and sizeable portions of the East between the marked years of 323 and 787, which is a span of 464.[52] That converts to *44 percent* of the time there was a rift between the East and Rome during that span of time (323–787).

This leads to his conclusion that "during the five centuries which followed the persecutions, the Greek Church passed *nearly half of her time* out of communion with Rome and in schism."[53] That is startling. Furthermore, Fr. Duchesne notes the last three of these major schisms were healed, in large measure, not because of the Greek episcopate's desire

[50] Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, 109–10.

[51] Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, 110.

[52] This is not counting the rupture in communion between the West and East from the Nestorian or Persian Church of the East (431) or the Miaphysites (451). If we were to factor these in, there would simply be even more circumstantial evidence that Eastern Christians were prepared to rally for the sake of what they thought was true over and against the claims of divine authority in the bishop of Rome.

[53] Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, 110.

for communion with the pope but rather the Byzantine emperor's insistence.[54] Not without good reason, this French historian sees the starting point of the tension polarizing East and West in the imperialization of Christianity and in particular, the opposition to the Council of Nicaea, which gained support from the emperor's court. The pattern developed of utilizing the crown of the state to control ecclesiastical affairs over and against the older apostolic primacy. This novel development in the Church culminates in the feud between Rome and Constantinople in the second millennium, when a renewed West orbiting the papacy sought to restrict and command a self-proclaimed "independent" East orbiting the Byzantine emperor.[55] Matching the conclusions reached by modern scholarship, although giving far more color, Fr. Duchesne writes:

> In point of fact, the Greek schism dates *as far back as the fourth century*; its real authors were neither Cerularius, nor yet Photius, but Eusebius of Nicomedia and his accomplices, in his opposition to the Council of Nice. It was under the guidance of this party that the *autonomy* of the Byzantine episcopate was first organized and established.[56]

In sum, with the rise of Constantinople as the first see of Eastern Christendom, the Byzantines slowly accomplished an autonomy which balked at the idea of being subject to the Roman church as the divinely appointed authoritative head. This way of painting the canvas of the gradual bifurcation between East and West was also used by the late Anglican patristics scholar, Dr. Trevor Gervase Jalland. Speaking from the late fourth century time period, he writes:

> Henceforward in the East . . . *it is Caesar's will which is the chief determining favor in questions of doctrine and discipline alike*. . . . Henceforth the history of the eastern churches

[54] Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, 110. On this I might say that Fr. Duchesne is a bit excessive in his assertion. There were plenty of appeals sent to Rome from monks and other clergy of the Greek episcopate who lived under the tyranny of anti-Chalcedonianism, Monothelitism, and iconoclasm. Certainly, it cannot be said that the whole East never sought to be reintegrated with the communion of Rome during the healing of these schisms.

[55] Modern scholarship has certainly blunted the sword of this historical criticism against the East, as the Eastern episcopate often contended with the Byzantine Emperor for his overreach of authority in ecclesiastical matters. Also, the papal West has its own share of time partaking in the use of the emperors for the dissemination of doctrine and discipline.

[56] Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, 150 (emphasis added).

> is the record of the gradual elimination of primitive ecclesiastical autonomy, and its replacement by a *Caesaropapism*. . . . It is also in *some measure the record of an unremitting struggle on the part of the Papacy to preserve the coherence of the Church.*[57]

Now, I cannot pretend to agree with all of this without some qualification,[58] but I would also be negligent if I failed to say that I strongly sympathize with the overall thrust of the canvas being painted. *Caesaropapism* surely played a major role in establishing an autocephalous[59] Eastern sector under the authority of the Byzantine emperor, and especially at times when the latter subjugated the papacy under its arm. At the end of the day, the student of history cannot escape that there was something pregnant on both sides of the Roman West and the Byzantine East, which eventually gave birth to a full-blown separation. The birth pangs along the way only add corroborative evidence to an already conclusive reality.

What is perhaps more amazing is that a sort of *modus vivendi*, as Yves Congar called it,[60] existed at all. Might it be the case that since the raw historical data presents a more widely diverse picture of the Christian Church, that the debate only gets resolved from a mixture of finding the best average of what Christians believed in the first millennium but also with a view to looking at *a priori* philosophical insight? Just what kind of an ecclesiology can sustain a unified visible Church, and is there sufficient evidence of that being held and accepted by Scripture and Tradition? These questions get us closer to the resolution.

---

[57] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 266–67 (emphasis added). For Jalland, the primitive "ecclesiastical autonomy" is only preserved by the effort of the papacy to lead the Church against the Byzantine emperors; see Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 364 and 533.

[58] The patristic data shows quite clearly that even the popes who exclaimed their divinely instituted position from St. Peter over the universal Church understood that the Roman emperor had certain God-given rights that manifest themselves, in some way, with the external organization of the Church. For a critical review of Jalland, see Fr. Francis Dvornik's "Dr. Jalland's Book on the Papacy," *New Blackfriars*, vol. 26, issue 299, 1945.

[59] Self-governing, in general, contra papal jurisdiction. Not to be confused with the local autocephalous body.

[60] Congar, *After Nine Hundred Years*, 62.

## *Chapter Three*

# Epistemological Considerations

In Chapter 1, we covered the locus of historical sources. Both Catholics and Orthodox recognize their sources in Scripture, Tradition, ecumenical councils, the liturgy, and the consensus of the Fathers. Theoretically speaking, with one wellspring of divine Revelation and the same sources of holy Tradition, all should be able to arrive at the same beliefs. But it would only take a few minutes of reflection to see that this is not the case. What appears to be a huge doorway toward unity and agreement quickly turns into a tight bottleneck of disputation over what these sources mean.[1] In Chapter 2, we described certain methods of how research is conducted on the historical sources, and it was apparent that both the Orthodox and the Catholic want to simply carry on the one apostolic deposit of faith handed once and for all to the saints and passed on in the Fathers. Unfortunately, even with this singular intention, appeals to the Fathers never truly resolved the debate between the Latins and the Greeks. What was believed by all, in all places, at all times, was a matter of dispute.

The irony here is the Lérinian rule, to which we return for a moment, was originally intended to equip Christians to "be able to distinguish the truth of Catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical pravity."[2] St. Vincent mentions how one might suggest that Scripture alone might

[1] I don't intend to exaggerate here; the conflict isn't as egregious as the divergences between interpreters that occurs in the paradigm of *sola scriptura*.

[2] Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins*, in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of*

suffice as this rule, but then he notes, "owing to the depth of Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters."[3]

For St. Vincent, the Christian should consult the whole body of the Church, and if not, should consult with the sources of antiquity. These antique sources are first and foremost the decrees of ecumenical councils and then the writings of the Church Fathers. If, however, a problem exists for which there is no decree of a council, St. Vincent suggests that one is left with reading the Church Fathers, though not "by one or two of these only, but by all, equally, with one consent, openly, frequently, persistently."[4] But as we saw happen with the Protestant Reformation, a further question was not asked by St. Vincent, namely, what if two or more disagree as to the interpretation of not just the Holy Scriptures, but also ecumenical councils as well as the Church Fathers? Should I then trust my own private interpretation of the Fathers even if it leads me to create an island of my own? Does St. Vincent's rule then become a rule justifying isolationism, schism, or worse, individualism, all in the name of Scripture, Tradition, councils, and the consensus of the Fathers?

The Catholic Church answers this by rejecting the idea that an individual could ultimately rest on his own decision on doctrinal questions, regardless of how dependent he claims to be on the objectivity of Scripture, Tradition, *consensus patrum*, and the ecumenical councils. On the contrary, Catholicism teaches that the "task of authentically interpreting the Word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the *living teaching office of the Church*, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. . . . It is clear, therefore, that Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture *and the teaching authority of the Church*, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."[5] Therefore, as St. John H. Newman came to understand, the need for a *living voice of authority* to finalize

*Lérins, John Cassian, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 11, eds. P. Schaff and H. Wace, trans. C. A. Heurtley (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 132.

[3] Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins*, 132.

[4] Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins*, 133.

[5] Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, by Pope Paul VI (November 18, 1965), §10, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

the correct interpretation on the Christian faith is proof enough for the existence of the living voice itself. Pope Pius XI wrote: "These two commands of Christ, which must be fulfilled, the one, namely, *to teach*, and the other *to believe*, cannot even be understood, unless the Church proposes a complete and *easily understood* teaching, and *is immune when it thus teaches from all danger of erring*."[6]

Christ commanded the Apostles, and their successors to teach his doctrine to every creature, and then commanded every creature to believe that doctrine. If both of these commands are to begin in Jerusalem and reach the ends of the earth, then the Lord must have ordained that the Church have a living magisterium which has the power to infallibly teach the Gospel such that the doctrine disseminated is accurate and every creature has the chance to accurately assent to Christ's original doctrine. Catholic theologian Dr. Lawrence Feingold wrote concerning this:

> For, if God revealed His will to man in time and in history, He must provide some way of preserving what He has revealed for the men of all times and places. This cannot be ensured without an infallible authority that continues in the contingent circumstances of history and can determine all religious questions that may arise.[7]

Quoting St. John Henry Newman, Dr. Feingold adds:

> The most obvious answer, then, to the question, why we yield to the authority of the Church in the questions and developments of faith, is, that some authority there must be if there is a revelation given, and other authority there is none but She. *A revelation is not given if there be no authority to decide what it is that is given.* . . . The absolute need of a spiritual supremacy is at present the strongest of arguments in favour of the fact of its supply.[8]

---

[6] Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*: On Religious Unity (January 6, 1928), §8.17, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html.

[7] Lawrence Feingold, *Faith Comes from What is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2016), 244 (emphasis added).

[8] Feingold, *Faith Comes from What Is Heard*, 244.

In order to safeguard and render permanent the sacred content of the Lord's Gospel unto the ends of the earth, an infallible voice is supplied by God. The living voice of the Church's magisterium is equipped with authority in order to bind the members of the Church with the true doctrine of Christ. Whereas a church filled with persons who are equal in authority could not help but result in schism and a crystallization of factions, each claiming equal legitimacy from heaven. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, quoting *Dei Verbum*:

> "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the *living teaching office* of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the *bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.*[9]

The magisterium consists of the episcopal college, which succeeds the Apostolic College, which is unified under one head, the successor of St. Peter and the Roman Pontiff. Its infallible capacity is defined herein:

> The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. . . . *The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops* when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium, *above all in an Ecumenical Council.* When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed," and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith." This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.[10]

And:

---

[9] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition (New York: Doubleday, 1995), §85.

[10] *CCC*, §891.

> The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.[11]

Again, the purpose of establishing a living authoritative teaching office is so that there is a present voice who can speak to teach divine Revelation, clarify what is obscure, resolve theological disputes, enforce obedience to doctrine, and exercise discipline over dissident members of the Church. The assumption here is that God has not made a church full of men infused with perfect knowledge with no space for disagreement, division, or scandal. That would be eternal glory. As James Madison wrote, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."

Ever since the sin of Adam, mankind has been prone to mistake, error, sin, misjudgment, and foolish decision-making. Even within the community of the baptized, the sanctified members are not always proven to be precisely correct in every opinion. In order to make certain and secure the permanence and perpetuity of the divine Revelation once given and deposited by Christ in the apostolic Church, God established a visible and permanent magisterium, which itself has a permanent principle of unity in the singular person of St. Peter and his lineal successors. This was established in order to make visible and unmistakable the location of the true Church and thus the location of the infallible truth of God.

The above explanation for the need for a visible criterion for the truth of the Christian revelation has won criticism from some Orthodox theologians.[12] For some, the Catholic insistence on the need and appropriateness of a living magisterium is tantamount to a denial of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. God has come to mankind and has sought to abide with him. Christ is *Emmanuel*, God with us. Anyone who loves Christ, says he, "will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him*."[13] "To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by

---

[11] *CCC*, §88.

[12] Philip Sherrard, *Church, Papacy, and Schism: A Theological Inquiry* (Limni: Demose Harvey, 1978), 34–64; Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 45–71; e.g., John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 63–69.

[13] John 14:23.

name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, *and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*"[14] St. Paul wrote, "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in *our hearts to give the light of the knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[15] St. John makes it unmistakable when he says, "But the anointing which you have received from him abides in you, *and you have no need that anyone should teach you.*"[16]

Clearly, the New Testament teaches that there is an internal illumination by the power of God in the believer such that he or she simply knows the truth by this internal supernatural knowing. So what need is there for this visible magisterium of pope and bishops to teach the baptized? It would almost seem like a pathetic human attempt to add to the power of God. That is certainly how the late Romanian Orthodox theologian Fr. Dumitru Staniloae perceives the Catholic doctrine. He writes concerning the documents of Vatican II:

> This fear, or this desire to have a "guarantee" for the biblical truth in the magisterium of the Church, points to the absence of a strong pneumatology in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation just as it explains the exaggerated emphasis on papal infallibility in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.[17]

Quoting Greek Orthodox theologian Nikos A. Nissiotis,[18] Fr. Staniloae continues this same line of thought:

> "It is, perhaps, here that one has to try to explain the anxiety. . . *to find a clear criterion of authority* alongside the Scripture and the Tradition" in the successors of the Apostles to whom authority was given to teach in place of the Apostles. Nissiotis goes on to ask why it is that Orthodoxy makes no separation between Bible and Tradition, and

[14] John 10:3–4.

[15] 2 Cor 4:6.

[16] 1 John 2:27.

[17] Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 48.

[18] Former Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey who also stood by to watch the Second Vatican Council as a representative for the World Council of Churches, Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 45.

> especially why *it feels no need to insist on the hierarchical magisterium as a guarantee of Tradition.*[19]

What does Orthodoxy offer in its place? Continuing to cite Nissiotis, Fr. Staniloae thinks the Orthodox Church has the remedy by, rather than looking to some external office like a magisterium, consulting doctrine through the "wholeness of the community in Christ set up, *gathered and led by the Paraclete into the Truth. . . .* The consciousness of this whole community as the People of God."[20] In other words, the consciousness of the whole Church, clergy and laity, is the norm of Christian doctrine, and the guarantee of its veritable content. For Fr. Staniloae, the principle of unity is the Holy Spirit, which himself binds all the members of the Church into the single mind of Christ.[21] Critical of what he perceives as Roman Catholic doctrine, he characterizes the former as a humanization of the Christian Church, as if the body members of Christ needed to be ordered and commanded by an external authority set up over them.[22]

There is also the Greek teaching on the distinction between God's essence and energies (or operations) which supposedly come to bear on this matter. For since God truly enters into creation to live inside each one of us by a union of the creature with the uncreated energies of God, the full gap between creature and Creator is closed into this mystical healing of the human person, including the mind. With this, the mind is brought to know the mysteries of God and knows the Truth by an inward prompt. The late Orthodox author Philip Sherrard, carrying the same critique of Catholicism, got at this point quite cogently when he wrote:

> In medieval western theology as a whole the awareness of the distance separating the Creator from creation is too much to the fore to permit the development of that sense of visible things constituting a kind of *theomorphic microcosm* which lies behind traditional patristic ecclesiology. One the contrary, what is emphasized is the sense of an ontological gap between the spiritual world and the world of time and

[19] Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 49.

[20] Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 50.

[21] Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 54.

[22] Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 56–57; Fr. Staniloae understands the Catholic magisterium as sort of an external entity which must coerce its authority to press upon the Church in order to keep the Church together in unity, as opposed to the internal power of the Holy Spirit pulling together into one life all the members of the Holy Spirit.

> place, between the divine and the human, between God and nature. . . . Here what is to be noted is how this attitude in its turn is reflected in the ecclesiology of the Roman church. For what is emphasized in this ecclesiology is not so much the indissoluble union of the divine and human elements of the Church, not so much the participation of the created and visible aspects of the Church in its uncreated and invisible aspects, or the Church as the entry to eternity into time, a theophany. *What is emphasized is more the gap between the Church in its divine, uncreated, and invisible aspects and the elements of the Church in its human, created, and visible aspects and elements.*[23]

Recall how I cited from James Madison above, who said there would be no need for government if men were angels, in order to show that a similar idea lies behind Christ's establishment of a church government. Is Orthodoxy positing a sort of angelic knowledge of God, such that ecclesial mediation becomes superfluous? Sherrard anticipates this as he states:

> The consequence of this is that it is now assumed that the Church on earth has to be governed in exactly the same way as any other earthly and human society or institution. . . . *In other words, the Church on earth must possess a magisterium* (which provides the positive criterion for the life in truth).[24]

For Sherrard, the Catholic conception of a living voice or magisterium rests on this idea that man is too weakened by sin and the fall of Adam, and the Church therefore needs to have a governing entity to police the organization. Consequently, he argues, the West conceives of the papal monarchy, and the bishops in union with it, as this artificial construct to meet the need of such a weakened human society.[25] Fr. John Meyendorff contributes to this criticism of the manner in which the concept of authority developed in the West. The driving concern for the West, says

[23] Sherrard, *Church, Papacy, and Schism*, 41–42.

[24] Sherrard, *Church, Papacy, and Schism*, 44.

[25] Sherrard, *Church, Papacy, and Schism*, 51–56. Interestingly, Sherrard also thinks that the institution of patriarchs, pentarchy, and the current day primacy of Constantinople are all conceptions which "badly need reexamining in the light of patristic principles" (Sherrard, *Church, Papacy, and Schism*, 62–63).

Fr. Meyendorff, was to figure out a way to manufacture a protection to the "God-established reality, the Church." Pointing out this motive in the minds of those who shaped the Western tradition, Fr. Meyendorff sees the underlying drive, namely, that "the continuity and strength of the Church could be *guaranteed only through infallible authority*." Echoing the criticisms of the authors already cited, Fr. Meyendorff argues that it was the Augustinian view of man as totally depraved in both mind and body which required the West to manufacture a crutch to overcome reliance on the weakness of man, and rather to trust an external infallible magisterium to prevent the depraved sinners from permanent schisms.[26]

Furthermore, Fr. Meyendorff explains how the Orthodox Church does not have a specifically defined criterion of divine truth. The invisible God himself and himself alone is the criterion of divine truth. For the West, and for Catholics in particular, there is the development of papal infallibility in order to find doctrinal security whereas in Orthodoxy, "no need for, or necessity of, such a security was ever really felt for the simple reason that the *living Truth is its own criterion*."[27] As its own criterion, the Truth is apprehended from within by the Holy Spirit. The basic picture is clear. The Latin West lacked the realization that the Holy Spirit is the "inward or immanent principle of the Church, incorporating through the divine energies of the Spirit the members of the Church into the body of Christ,"[28] and rather artificially created an authoritative entity, the papacy with the magisterium, which externally stands over the Church in order to provide the unitive force which her members substantially lack, being the misguided sheep without a shepherd that they are.

But is what we have read above an accurate representation of the Catholic position? Does the Catholic Church really teach that all her members are devoid of an internal or immanent principle which impels unity toward knowledge of the Truth and one mind in Christ? Does the Catholic Church teach that the only force which impels visible unity and agreement in the body of Christ is the pope and the magisterium around him, as it were, standing over the Church as some external crutch to fix the lack of certainty? Does the Catholic teaching imply this desperate search for an infallible machinery in order to make up for an intellectual deficiency? It may come as a bit of a shock to some Orthodox that it was Pope Pius XII (1939–1958) who wrote the following

[26] Meyendorff, *Living Tradition*, 43.

[27] Meyendorff, *Living Tradition*, 20.

[28] E.g., Sherrard, *Church, Papacy, and Schism*, 37.

words in his encyclical on this very subject of the mystical and unifying body of Christ:

> Because Christ is so exalted, *He alone by every right rules and governs the Church*; and herein is yet another reason why He must be likened to a head. As the head is the "royal citadel" of the body—to use the words of Ambrose—and all the members over whom it is placed for their good are *naturally guided by it as being endowed with superior powers, so the Divine Redeemer holds the helm of the universal Christian community and directs its course.*[29]

He continues writing directly to the mechanics in which the members of the body of Christ are brought together into one. Pius XII states:

> Our union in and with Christ is first evident from the fact that, since Christ wills His Christian community to be a Body which is a perfect Society, its members must be united because they all work together towards a single end. The nobler the end towards which they strive, and the more divine the motive which actuates this collaboration, the higher, no doubt, will be the union. Now the end in question is supremely exalted; the continual sanctifying of the members of the Body for the glory of God and of the Lamb that was slain. The motive is altogether divine: not only the good pleasure of the Eternal Father, and the most earnest wish of our Savior, *but the interior inspiration and impulse of the Holy Spirit in our minds and hearts.* For if not even the smallest act conducive to salvation can be performed *except in the Holy Spirit*, how can countless multitudes of every people and every race work together harmoniously for the supreme glory of the Triune God, *except in the power of Him, who proceeds from the Father and the Son in one eternal act of love?*[30]

---

[29] Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*: On the Mystical Body of Christ (June 29, 1943), §37, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html. Notice the emphasis on Christ as having priority in every aspect of growth in his body.

[30] Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, §68.

To the same point, he writes:

> But our Divine Savior governs and guides the Society which He founded *directly* and *personally* also. For it is He who reigns within the minds and hearts of men, and bends and subjects their wills to His good pleasure, even when rebellious. . . . By this interior guidance He the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," not only watches over individuals but exercises His providence over the universal Church.[31]

Lastly, Pius XII contrasts the cause of unity in an external gathering of men is simply their common end or goal with the cause of unity in the body of Christ. Instead of the cause of unity being external like in a worldly society of men united by a stated goal, he states:

> In the Mystical Body of which We are speaking, this collaboration is supplemented by another *internal principle*, which exists effectively in the whole and *in each of its parts*, and whose excellence is such that of itself it is vastly superior to whatever bonds of union may be found in a physical or moral body. As We said above, this is something not of the natural but of the supernatural order; *rather it is something in itself infinite, uncreated: the Spirit of God, who, as the Angelic Doctor says, "numerically one and the same, fills and unifies the whole Church."*[32]

For Catholics, the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is the "principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the body."[33] However, it should be asked whether Christ so rules and shepherds the souls of the Church in such a way as to be absolutely direct, devoid of any mediation at all? Such an idea is heretical. When Jesus Christ sent the Apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, he did not authorize them to do so until they had waited for the promise of the Father, who is the Holy Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost. It was not the Holy Spirit sent upon the world purely and simply. It was not the Apostles sent out with authority purely and simply. It was only when these three came

[31] Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, §39.
[32] Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, §62.
[33] *CCC*, §798.

together, (1) *the Spirit*, (2) *the witness*, and (3) *the apostolic office*, that the true mission of the Apostles began.

This is what undergirds the whole concept of apostolic succession in both Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The Word of God was not delivered to an open forum for each individual to claim knowledge and certainty of. The Word was entrusted to witnesses who were endowed with a mission, and thus an authority to fulfill that mission. And these authoritative witnesses continue down to us in the form of a succession. This maintains the theocratic[34] (θεοκρατικός) nature of the delivered Word, since it is traceable back to Jesus Christ, θεός himself. The Word of God is indispensably delivered along with a divinely commissioned witness, and God never operates with only one or the other. The Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Apostles, and the Apostles sent the bishops. Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, when he was Fr. Joseph Ratzinger, adequately speaks to this principle as representative of the early Christian apologists against the Gnostic aberrations of the Word:

> We may say that the Church opposes the Gnostic notion of secret unwritten traditions, not in the first place with Scripture, but with the principle of succession. "Apostolic succession" is by its nature *the living presence of the word in the personal form of the witness.*[35]

We know that it was straightaway that the Church began to require outward profession of faith in the Apostles' doctrine,[36] baptism in water, the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, and the public gatherings of the "breaking of the bread." Surely, we see apostolic and ecclesial mediation right away at the launch of the Church's mission in Jerusalem. A famous passage from St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians also speaks of the ascended Lord removing his visible presence from the world but subsequently outpouring gifts to men through the Holy Spirit so that some, not all, are endowed with the role of apostle, pastor-teachers, evangelists, and prophets for the benefit of equipping the whole body with the

---

[34] Borrowing the term from Felix L. Cirlot, *Apostolic Succession: At the Bar of Modern Scholarship* (West Park, NY: Holy Cross Press, 1946), 108.

[35] Joseph Ratzinger, *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, eds. Peter Hünermann and Thomas Söding, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008), 30 (emphasis added).

[36] Acts 2:42.

means of becoming united as one.[37] The author to the Hebrews specifies the need to obey those appointed in authority: "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give an account."[38]

Pope Pius XII wonderfully testified to the immanent or internal principle of unity in the souls of the just being that of the power of the Holy Spirit which binds the members of Christ together. But it must not be thought that by this there is no place for an external criterion for the visibility of the Church, in particular the Church's mediatorial function. Just as the Holy Spirit was poured out on mankind *not without* the mediation of the visible apostolic office on the day of Pentecost, so likewise the Spirit internally unifies the Church *not without* the divinely established visible hierarchical government, whose head is the successor of St. Peter. There is no denial of the immanent principle of the Holy Spirit ruling and sanctifying to consolidate the baptized together, but, as Pius XII made clear, "We must not think that He rules only in a hidden or extraordinary manner. On the contrary, our Redeemer also governs His Mystical Body in a visible and normal way *through His Vicar on earth*."[39] As will be shown, this principle is eminently testified by prominent witnesses in the Church Fathers all throughout the first millennium.

Without going any further than this, it is quite difficult to see where the modern Orthodox criticism[40] gets anywhere near the target. Catholic teaching fully embraces the belief that it is the supernatural power of God which binds the souls of the faithful together into one body and vitally works toward that end ever present and actively by several means. I perceive, therefore, a strawman in this Orthodox critique. Moreover, it is also easy to sense that with the rejection of authority and obedience being key instruments in binding the body of Christ together, the Orthodox who carry such objections devolve into something similar to the reign of subjectivist religion, anarchic collapse, or a purely charismatic practice of the faith. It was against the Gnostics that St. Irenaeus pointed to the divine embodiment of the Church's faith in the succession of the presbyters. In the same way, it would be centuries later that Catholics would appeal to the unifying power of St. Peter's office in order to safeguard the faith from being corrupted by the self-acclaimed authority of individuals and sects. The latter are seen among the Protestant denominations

[37] Eph 4:11–14.

[38] Heb 13:17.

[39] Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, §40.

[40] This criticism is not given by all Orthodox theologians.

which authorize any reader of the Scriptures to find which interpretation is enforceable versus negligible. The Orthodox are mindful of this, and so they, too, have managed to introduce visible embodiments that make a rule for proper interpretations. Fr. John Meyendorff himself recognizes that the Orthodox emphasis on the Spiritual prompting to convey truth to the mind is not to be equated with individualism or anarchy, and even admits that the episcopal office of the bishop as the monarch of the local church shows the need for a visible governor to maintain unity![41]

Here, Fr. Meyendorff aptly locates a principle of unity amidst the local diocese in order to safeguard against the principles of individualism and anarchy. The "monarchical episcopate" is the rule of one over all in the local church. As St. Ignatius of Antioch is famous for bringing to light, the unity of the body of Christ is in the bishop, and one must never do anything without him or his approval. It only takes a few more steps to deduce that if the Orthodox are willing to accept the need for this kind of visible criteria in the local diocese, why would it not be the case that such a visible criterion should exist on the universal level?

However much the Orthodox theologian might want to relegate the principle of unity to the supernatural mysticism in the corporate body or in the individual, they cannot seem to escape the reality of an established hierarchical order in the visible structure of the Church. Even Fr. Staniloae recognized that there is a visible order established by the diverse gifts given by the Holy Spirit.[42] Christ, for the Orthodox, did not leave the Church's visible structure to spontaneous charismatic impulses. The Orthodox also recognize a difference between the clergy and the laity, where the former have been entrusted with the task of teaching, governing, and sanctifying through the sacraments. After describing the real distinction between the teaching office of the shepherds and flock who follows the lead of the former, another Orthodox theologian Fr. Sergius Bulgakov proceeds with similar points:

---

[41] Meyendorff, *Living Tradition*, 35. In another place, Fr. Meyendorff says that the presence of the bishop, or that of councils and Tradition, is not an external authority but merely the presence of Christ who resides in each individually. But this sort of rationalization can equally apply to Catholic ecclesiology (Meyendorff, *Living Tradition*, 44). One wonders how authority can function, not as a way to oblige obedience, but only as an expression of a non-authoritative process.

[42] Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 54. For Fr. Staniloae, even the Church's ministries are subordinated to the whole body since they are ordered to its service and since these ministries are within the Church rather than without.

> But this does not at all mean that all teaching belongs to the pastors and that the laity are entirely without this function, having only the duty of passive acceptance of doctrines taught. Such a point of view, which sharply divides ecclesiastical society into two parts, the active and the passive, does not agree with the true *inwardness of Christianity*. . . . It is to the people, *to all believers*, to all Christianity and not the hierarchy alone (as ultra-hieratists believe) that the words of Our Savior were addressed: "Go then, teach all nations," and again: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).[43]

This concept is not entirely contradictory to even Catholic teaching. The bishops at Vatican II state plainly that Christ continues to fulfill his prophetic office "not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life."[44] The International Theological Commission taught that "all the baptized" participate in the prophetic, kingly, and priestly ministry of Christ, and that the Second Vatican Council taught "that Christ fulfills his prophetic office not only by means of the hierarchy but also via the laity."[45]

From the above Orthodox critiques, it appears as though the primary objection is that the Catholic doctrine of the papacy and the magisterium entails an external and extra-ecclesial structure which imposes itself from the outside upon the members of the Church, rather than an immanent and internal principle of unifying the body of Christ in both knowledge and charity, otherwise called "sobornocity."[46] If the Orthodox

---

[43] Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 52.

[44] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, by Pope Paul VI (November 21, 1964), §35, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

[45] International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei*: In the Life of the Church (2014), §4, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

[46] In his book, *The Orthodox Church*, 60–61, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov defines "sobornost" as follows: "The word is derived from the very 'sobirat,' which, by a remarkable coincidence, means both 'council' and 'church.' Sobornost is the state of being together. . . . To be believe in a 'sobornaia' church is to believe in a Catholic Church, in the original sense of the word,

manage to show that such an external criteria is not needed, then it serves as a major blow to the doctrine of the papacy. Historically, this critique is rather new and recent. It is most likely to be sourced in a Russian Orthodox thinker Aleksei Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804–1860), the most influential leader of what is known as the Slavophile movement.[47] This was an intellectual movement drawing from "intuitive, non-rational knowledge, such as is revealed in poetry and religion."[48] Both "Romanticism and German Idealism"[49] were in the background of the major players of Slavophilism. Identifying two kinds of functioning principles in human society, they stressed the benefit of liberation. "As against love, freedom, and cooperation stood the world of rationalism, necessity, and compulsion."[50] Khomyakov brought these ideas into the religious sphere of Eastern Orthodoxy over and against the Western principles of ecclesiology. Roman Catholicism "had chosen rationalism and authority in preference to love and harmony and had seceded from Orthodox Christendom."[51] Fr. George A. Maloney, S.J. refers to Khomyakov as "the most influential Russian lay theologian of the modern age."[52] Others find a more patristic motive. For example, Fr. Georges Florovsky writes of Khomyakov:

> He was, in the years to come, to exercise an enormous influence on the ways of Russian theology. . . . He wanted to restate the Orthodox tradition in a new idiom which would be at the same time modern and traditional, i.e., *in conformity with the teaching of the Fathers and with the continuous experience of the living Church.* He wanted to liberate Russian theology, first of all, from the bondage of Western

in a Church that assembles and unites: it is also to believe in a conciliar Church in the sense Orthodoxy gives to the term, that is in a Church of the ecumenical councils, as opposed to a purely monarchical ecclesiology. . . . Sobornost may also be translated as 'harmony,' 'unanimity.'"

[47] Fr. Alexander Schmemann, ed., *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 29–69.

[48] Aleksey Khomyakov and Ivan Kireyevsky, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader, with Essays by Yury Samarin, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Pavel Florensky*, eds. and trans. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), 9.

[49] Khomyakov, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, 9.

[50] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 402.

[51] Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 402.

[52] George A. Maloney, S.J., *A History of Orthodox Theology Since 1453* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), 57.

> scholasticism, which had been cultivated for a long time in the schools.[53]

The concept of *sobornost* gets peculiar thematic architecture from the writings of Khomyakov,[54] and his understanding of it can be defined as "the combination of freedom and unity of many persons on the basis of their common love for the same absolute values."[55] Generally speaking, Khomyakov's vision of the ideal human society is one marked by a community of individuals who are freely moved by a mutual love for each other, and whose principle of unity and good arise from the internal motion to desire the same end. To have a society where there are the lords and rulers over a lower class is not an ideal societal unity since the lower class is denied its freedom and the rulers are an external force acting upon it.

This general vision of ideal humanity also applies especially, for Khomyakov, in the Church of Jesus Christ. This Church is a community marked by a "combination of unity and freedom based upon the love of God and His truth and the mutual love of all who love God."[56] Each individual is internally loved by the direct working of the Holy Spirit, moving the individual's will to freely adhere to the one Truth and to interact with one's neighbor in that same Truth by mutual love and sharing. The unity here depicted is therefore coming from within rather than a unity imposed by leaders or governors. Included in this vision is a certain kind of sociological idealism, that is, "the ideal of Russia."[57] For Khomyakov, "the Church, and Russia to a certain extent, represented for him examples of an accomplished utopia, free and open Eucharistic communities, permeated by the mutual trust that comes from a shared faith."[58]

In my own reading of Khomyakov, I interpret him as attempting to

---

[53] Georges Florovsky, "Orthodox Ecumenism in the Nineteenth Century," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, vol. IV, nos. 3–4 (1956), 20, citation from *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Schmemann, 30.

[54] The etymology of the word includes "so" (co) and "brat" (gather) making the verb sobrat, "to convoke." Sts. Cyril and Methodius, says Archbishop Stylianos Harkianakis, had already used the adjective form "sobornoj" to translate the word Catholic in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Etymology and historical claim directly from Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology*, trans. Philip Kariatlis (Sydney: St. Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2008), 208.

[55] Nicholas O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1951), 41.

[56] Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 37.

[57] Khomyakov, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, 14.

[58] Khomyakov, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, 14.

paint the Church of Christ as the truest example of man freed to know and love God, and the corporate body of the Church is characterized as each member being drawn to one and the same end from an internal principle of unity. Where there is perfect love and absolute freedom, there is no need for a government or police system to hold the corporate body accountable, as if it were prone to fail in its ideal. Therefore, Khomyakov looked upon the Roman Catholic papacy and magisterium as indications that Catholics believed there was not enough provided by the Holy Spirit to guarantee this sort of unity just by being a Christian. Since Catholicism requires this external government to maintain order, peace, and unity, it is still a man-made society which has its "roots in the Roman State."[59]

One prominent Orthodox saint, Nectarios of Aegina (1846–1920), follows this Khomyakovian pattern: "Unity is internal, mystical, direct . . . and does not need any external bond."[60] Russian theologian, Hilarion (Troitsky), archbishop of Vereya, remarked that Khomyakov "wonderfully understood" the "concept of the Church."[61] To the opposite, only a worldly system like secular Rome would require the imposition of an external authority in the form of government and a police institution. The whole picture is far too secular and rationalistic in contrast to the Christian community, which is free and guaranteed to be one and undivided by the spontaneous working of the Holy Spirit, even without institutional guarantees. Dr. Andrzej Walicki, Professor of Russian Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, succinctly describes Khomyakov's polar opposition between the principles of worldly unity versus the spiritual unity arising from interior love and freedom:

> In this world, there could only be an external and artificial unity precluding freedom; that is why European history had (in Khomyakov's succinct phrase) been the history of the struggle between "unity without freedom" and "freedom without unity." According to Khomyakov, the first principle was embodied in the Catholic Church, which established

[59] Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 37.

[60] Nectarios, *Historical Study on the Causes of Schism: On its Perpetuation and on the Possibility of Impossibility of Unity of the Two Churches, the Eastern and Western*, vol. 1 (Athens: P. Leoni, 1911), 67; Constantine Cavarnos, *The Question of Union: A Forthright Discussion of the Possibility of Union of the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism*, trans. Patrick Barker (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1992), 37.

[61] Hilarion (Troitsky), *Christianity or the Church?* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), 39.

> papal absolutism, exchanged the bond of love for institutionalized bonds, and itself *came to resemble a hierarchical and authoritarian state.*[62]

That last line Sherrard, Fr. Staniloae, and Fr. Meyendorff draw from when they make their same critique of the Catholic epistemology. Not surprisingly, however, latter Orthodox critics of Catholicism will not extend the Khomyakovian principle to its full since different thinkers can apply its basic idea moderately or radically.[63] For Khomyakov himself, even an ecumenical council is not, at the end of the day, the final authority in matters of faith or morals since that would imply a top-down authoritarianism, where a select governing body tells the whole society what to believe. Fr. Meyendorff makes this point, but he also then wants to have a place for a governing bishop on the local level, which seems to contradict the extreme of Khomyakov's ideology. Seeking to avoid this altogether, neither bishops nor councils are the last word according to Khomyakov. On the contrary, *it is the whole Church which arbitrates whether the council is acceptable and conformable to Tradition*, whether the content of these councils is acceptable to the whole Church's "inner thought."[64] Therefore, for Khomyakov, there is no bifurcation between teachers and taught (magisterium and student). All members of the hierarchy and the least of the baptized are all taught by God, and to devise a sort of "official function" of teaching that doesn't incorporate the consent of the entire membership of the Church is heretical, Romanism, or the "sacrament of rationalism."[65] While Khomyakov recognizes that bishops gathered together into councils to deliberate on the content of faith, the whole Church reserved "for herself the right to check the formula that they had adopted."[66]

From a Catholic perspective, there is much in Khomyakov's thought that is strongly agreeable. Who could argue that true unity is internal

---

[62] Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 94–95.

[63] For an Orthodox theologian's critique of Khomyakov, see Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology*.

[64] Khomyakov, "On the Western Confessions of Faith," in *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Schmemann, 45.

[65] Khomyakov, "On the Western Confessions of Faith," in *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Schmemann, 58.

[66] Khomyakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the archbishop of Paris," in *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, 109.

and mystically achieved by the power of the Holy Spirit? If anything, Khomyakov is guilty of positing an extreme reductionism. It is not mystique or ecclesiastical office; it is both/and. The Catholic would simply say that just like the Orthodox admit to the need of an external bond in the local and regional spheres of ecclesiality, so also the universal. That resolves the matter. On the other hand, one important criticism for the concept of receptionism—that is, only that which is received by everyone achieves the status of infallibility—is that there is hardly a time when the Church enjoyed unanimity in receiving a certain doctrine. There were times when what both Catholics and Orthodox considered infallible, such as the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon (451), did not even achieve the overwhelming majority as the Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian bishops gave no rest to their resistance. Those Christians still exist today in the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and they do not count the Council of Chalcedon as infallible doctrine.

The doctrine of receptionism also strips the authority of the Church at any given time from being able to finalize doctrinal decisions for the benefit of the Church in the here and now. When the Apostles finalized the decision over the question of whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised before receiving eternal salvation, that decision was described as a dogma (δόγματα) by St. Luke from the moment of its promulgation (Acts 16:4), and for this reason, it brought great joy to the church in Antioch (Act 15:31). Now, the eventual reception of that council's decree over time by the universal Church is certainly an indicator that it is true, but not to the denigration of the indication achieved simply by apostolic authority.

And so, while the Catholic Church does not deny the enlightenment given by the Holy Spirit to each of the baptized, she also does not deny that God, with the view to aid all the members of the Church, both strong and weak, equips a visible magisterium in the here and now to make final decisions that cannot be challenged evermore. One might find an analogy of this in the Church's defeat of the Donatist error. It was thought by some that the moral worthiness of the clergy was intrinsic to the successful dispensation of grace through their sacraments. The Church recognized that Christ did not make the achievement of salvation and grace dependent upon the moral worthiness of the priest but that the sacraments impart the same grace regardless of whether the priest is worthy or unworthy. That benefit was provided by Christ on behalf of the flock who would be at risk of losing the grace of God because of the sin of the priest if it were otherwise. In the same way, in

order to alleviate the threat of schism and confusion, Christ has provided an authoritative office that disseminates unquestionable and unchallengeable teaching, whose content everyone can be certain of, in light of both the weak and strong among the flock who need it.

## *Chapter Four*

# Primacy in the Orthodox Church

IF THERE EVER WERE TO BE a subject that severely calls Khomyakov's theory into question, it would be the subject of ecclesial primacy, for there exists no unanimity amongst Orthodox hierarchs and theologians on how receptionism can be successful even when combining the clergy and the laity. According to Archdeacon Maximos Vgenopoulos, a "primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church contradicts the ecclesiological principles of the undivided Church and as such is *rejected by the Orthodox Church*."[1] While this might be an adequate summary of the negative position of the Orthodox, there are many different interpretations of it by different Orthodox interpreters.

Is there an official view of primacy in Eastern Orthodoxy? There are, in fact, different understandings,[2] *but certainly no official view.* Fr. Alexander Schmemann said that Orthodox theology is "still awaiting a truly Orthodox evaluation of universal primacy in the first millennium

---

[1] Maximos Vgenopoulos, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 2013), 3 (emphasis added).

[2] Lest we think this is a total detriment, let the Catholic reader be aware that the Latin West took its time in disseminating a precise definition of papal primacy for many centuries up until the First Vatican Council. It was in the West that the Conciliarist movement arose during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In fact, even to this day, Catholic theologians debate over particular aspects of the pope's infallibility, whether or not a formally heretical pope is even possible, and if he could be deposed under various conditions.

of Church history,"[3] that "there does not exist even a *de facto* consensus of Orthodox opinion,"[4] and that the "idea of universal primacy is either rejected as alien to the very spirit of Orthodox or formulated in terms so vague and ambiguous that, instead of solving, they only obscure the whole primacy."[5] Fr. Theodore Pulcini, Professor of Religion and priest of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, completely excludes "the doctrine of universal papal jurisdiction" since it "was articulated—in clear opposition to the practice of the ancient Church. . . . It thus seemed that the Roman doctrine of papal primacy was *an innovation that had no precedent in early Christianity*."[6] On the other hand, Fr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis, who serves as an Orthodox presbyter and Professor of Philosophy at the College of the Holy Cross, states that the "phenomenon of anti-papism," which "has become increasingly more observable within the Orthodox Church," is the "denial of a primus for the universal Church," and "is, properly speaking, *heretical*."[7] The current ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, Patriarch Bartholomew, while holding to his place as the primate of the Orthodox Church, does not even believe that universal primacy comes from any special transaction from the Lord Jesus to St. Peter. Renowned Orthodox theologian Olivier-Maurice Clément reports on this:

> Again in Zurich, on 14 December 1995, Bartholomew stated unambiguously that *the only authority of divine origin in the Church was that of the bishops and their collegiality*, and that the pope's role had no scriptural foundation. At the end of June 1996, in an interview for the Polish weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the patriarch reaffirmed that "the ministry of the pope has become the biggest and most scandalous stumbling block" to dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Moreover, he questioned the exercise of

[3] Fr. Alexander Schmemann, "The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology," in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 164.

[4] Schmemann, "The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology," in *The Primacy of Peter*, by Meyendorff, 164 (emphasis added).

[5] Schmemann, "The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology," in *The Primacy of Peter*, by Meyendorff, 341.

[6] Fr. Theodore Pulcini, *Orthodox and Catholicism: What Are the Differences?* (Chesterton: Conciliar Press, 1995), 8.

[7] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 25 (emphasis added).

> this ministry since the end of the first millennium, notably, "the mistaken theological claims" *to universal papal jurisdiction.* For Bartholomew, *the mission given by Christ to Peter was in reality given to each bishop and to the bishops collectively*, as being successors of the Twelve, and not to the bishop of Rome alone.[8]

Thus, while the current day patriarchate of Constantinople might support a stronger notion of universal primacy, that understanding of primacy isn't based upon a unique Petrine foundation akin to the manner that Catholics hold. The Constantinopolitan prerogatives vis-à-vis world Orthodoxy are still a matter of intense debate among the Orthodox. The prominent Fr. John Erickson (OCA), former professor of canon law and church history of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, made it clear that while "the patriarch of Constantinople is acknowledged by all as 'first among equals,' what this priority involves in the actual life of the Orthodox churches in our day is *by no means clear.*"[9] This is proven by the facts. The late metropolitan of the Finnish Orthodox Church, Paul Olmari (1914–1988), writes:

> Unlike Roman Catholicism, the Orthodox Church has no common administrative center; each of the local Churches whose independence has been recognized has its own independent voice in the common affairs of the Church. For historical reasons the Patriarch of Constantinople holds a

---

[8] Olivier Clément, *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 86–87. In his *Conversations with Ecumenical Bartholomew I* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 189, Olivier Clément reports further on this: "The Patriarch has stated that there is no biblical foundation for the notion that the ministry of the Pope involves governance over the entire Church. The command addressed by Christ to Simon Peter applies to each bishop, and to all the bishops together according to the conciliar principle. . . . Before the schism, the Bishop of Rome was *primus inter pares*, in full interdependence with all bishops who were, collegially, the successors of the apostles." In his review of Olivier Clément's book, "You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy," Fr. Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., translated His Eminence Bartholomew's words from a French record, a portion of which states that the Lord's charge to St. Peter to feed the flock "did not have the meaning of *entrusting to him a higher pastoral task than that of the other disciples.* The Lord gave the name 'apostle' to all his disciples with *equal right* and *without any discrimination*" (*Pro Ecclesia* XII.3, 345).

[9] Fr. John Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 74 (emphasis added).

> position of honour among his peers, but he has no authority over the other independent, or autocephalous, Churches.[10]

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, a prominent voice representing the Moscow patriarchate, states quite plainly that the Orthodox "*have never had a single primate*," since it has always consisted of "*autocephalous local churches that are independent in their administration*."[11] The patriarch of Constantinople, who occupies a certain precedence, is simply the "*first among equals*," says Hilarion, and that this honorific primacy does not endow him "*with any jurisdictional rights beyond the boundaries of his own patriarchate*."[12] One can find the same negation to universal primacy in the work of Dr. Will Cohen, Professor of Theology at Scranton University, who serves as a subdeacon in the Orthodox Church of America (OCA). He echoes Metropolitan Hilarion on the perspective of the Russian Orthodox Church, which certainly makes up the majority of the Orthodox population in the contemporary world:

> Historically, ecclesial primacy at the universal level was not seen by many in the East as something clearly needed so long as there was an emperor. . . . Today primacy at the universal level is deemed unnecessary *according to the official teaching of the Orthodox Church in Russia*, which acts in closest concert with the civil power of the Russian state.[13]

It is statements like the above which led many theologians to think that the Orthodox Church has a completely flattened ecclesial government, ruled by a corporate body of equals. Thus, the Tübingen academic Ernst Benz (1907–1978), who was considered one of the "foremost experts on this subject in Germany" by the famous Russian Orthodox theologian Nicholas Zernov (1898–1980),[14] writes:

---

[10] Archbishop Paul Omari, *The Faith We Hold*, trans. Marita Nykänen and Esther Williams (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 20.

[11] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 336 (emphasis added).

[12] Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity*, 336.

[13] Will Cohen, "Recent Trends and Tensions," in *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*, vol. 2, ed. John Chryssavgis (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 858.

[14] See Zernov's review of Ernst Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), in *Church History*, vol. 33.1 (March 1964), 99.

> No single member of the Church is considered to have a legal position fundamentally superior to that of the other members. . . . The Orthodox Church prizes this democratic principle as one of its oldest traditions. Just as all the apostles were equal in rank and authority, so their successors, the bishops, *all are equal.*[15]

This can be misleading, as the Orthodox Church cannot help but to admit that there is a diversity of rank in the Church. As Fr. Alexander Schmemann said very well:

> The absence of "jurisdictional" subordination of one church to another, of one bishop to another, does not mean absence of hierarchy and order. This order in the early canonical tradition is maintained by the various levels of *primacies*, i.e., episcopal and ecclesiastical centers or focuses of unity.[16]

Of course, what Fr. Schmemann is referring to here are the regional primacies the early canons describe, none of which speak to the office of a universal primate, no matter how much the same author was open to such a phenomenon.[17] What seems clear, however, is that the Orthodox, albeit divided over the subject of a universal primate, unanimously agree that the See of Rome was, prior to the schism, *first* in the *order of sees* or *"taxis" of local churches.*[18] About this Roman primacy, the prominent Russian Orthodox theologian Fr. Nicholas Afanasiev (1893–1966) said, "no one denies, today, that she [Rome] has held a leading position, but we still have to ask *what position it was* and *what was its nature.*"[19] The

---

[15] Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life*, 70.

[16] Fr. Alexander Schmemann, *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Press, 1979), 91–92 (emphasis original), citation from *Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes*, by Donald Fairbairn (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 179.

[17] A very positive proposal for an Orthodox acceptance of an office of universal primacy of jurisdiction can be found in John Chryssavgis's "The Apostolic Tradition: Historical and Theological Principles," in *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*, vol. 1, 51–68. Archdeacon Chryssavgis, in many ways, is far more historically conscious than his colleagues in the Orthodox Church in Russia. However, the Russian ecclesiology, which denies any binding authority on the universal level of primacy, seems to be the growing majority view.

[18] *Τάξις*: "arrangement or order."

[19] Nicholas Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. Meyendorff, 91; Fr. Afanasiev was adamant that the Roman primacy was not even one of

Orthodox have been asking this question for many years, while never having a definitive answer for it.

As I asserted in the Introduction to this book, I believe the Orthodox Church comes closest to an official position in the synodal answer to the question of *universal* papal primacy in the two great encyclicals of 1848 and 1895, the status of which is proven to be authoritative. According to the salient Fr. John A. McGuckin, these two encyclicals carry the authority to "speak for" all Orthodox.[20] Orthodox theologian Dr. Paul Ladouceur summarizes the larger encyclical (1848) as a restatement of the "Orthodox position on major outstanding theological questions between the Orthodox and the Catholic churches. . . . Indeed, *most of the Encyclical is devoted to the status and role of the Pope in the church.*"[21] Fr. Thomas Hopko, speaking of the same encyclical, states that it was signed "by all the patriarchs of the Orthodox Church, together with twenty-nine bishops fully endorsed by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow," and is "held as the most authoritative document in modern Orthodox Church history."[22] The second encyclical (1895) is also regarded as "an official summary of all the differences that the Orthodox find unacceptable in the Roman Catholic Church and which thus constitute the main impediments to union."[23] Metropolitan Timothy Ware judges both to be "chief doctrinal statements" since the last ecumenical council (787).[24] Fr. Meyendorff calls the Encyclical of 1848 an "important, authoritative statement of

---

*primus inter pares*, "for in ancient times the ideas of honor and power were closely associated." If the Church is to have a hierarchy which has a Church at the top, it would be called a certain "priority," but not primacy. For Fr. Afanasiev, the basis for this priority "is neither power, nor honor, but only the authority that flows from love and is made manifest by love." If there is a Church that is "First" or "Primus," this Church "won its place by services rendered, and not by prestige. It could not impose its will on the other churches or make them carry out its decisions, for all decisions must first be ratified by other local churches." Very clearly, this is a low-level primacy based upon the manifestation of service and love, *rather than legal right or jurisdiction*. The papal West would see in the command of Christ to St. Peter (and his successors) to "feed my sheep," an institutional primacy of divine right which includes an authority of jurisdiction.

[20] John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 114.

[21] Paul Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology: Behold, I Make All Things New* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 27 (emphasis added).

[22] Fr. Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith, Vol. III: Bible and Church History* (New York: The Department of Religious Education—The Orthodox Church in America, 1973), 205.

[23] George A. Maloney, S.J., *A History of Orthodox Theology Since 1453* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), 196.

[24] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 203.

Orthodox *views on the Church*."[25] Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy (1925–2020), former dean and Professor of Dogmatic Theology at St. Sergius Institute, said that the 1848 Encyclical "was recognized as a symbolic text and *gained authoritative stature in Orthodox thought*."[26] Therefore, these encyclicals carry significant authority for the Orthodox world and can be seen as the most official statements hitherto on the subject of ecclesiology and primacy.

From the first encyclical, we learn that the Orthodox see *"no prerogative in St. Peter over the other Apostles, least of all in his successors."*[27] Not even was an appellate jurisdiction given to St. Peter.[28] Commenting on the contribution of St. Peter at the Council of Jerusalem (49), the Orthodox[29] say that St. Peter participated as an *"equal among equals."*[30] In other words, however much moral honor and prestige St. Peter may have had, his judgment counts as one single vote *equal to the rest*. One cannot help but sense that the Orthodox here are committed to what Fr. John Erickson called the "radical equality"[31] of all the bishops. As for the status of the primacy of the bishop of Rome, Patriarch Anthimos VII (1827–1913) of Constantinople and his synod answer the question of where Rome's purely honorific primacy comes from in the second encyclical. It was given to Rome by the Fathers. He writes:

---

[25] John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), 99 (emphasis added).

[26] Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Church: A Course in Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 111–12

[27] Orthodox Patriarchs, "Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848," *Fordham University*, §11, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1848orthodoxencyclical.asp. The immediate context here is strictly denying that the Johannine record of the Lord's thrice saying to St. Peter, "Feed my sheep," implied any prerogative over the other Apostles. Nevertheless, from reading the whole document, this much seems to be the general idea irrespective of the immediate context.

[28] Orthodox Patriarchs, "Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848," §13. In this paragraph, the patriarchs deny any appellate jurisdiction given to St. Peter, but they do recognize this sort of jurisdiction given to Rome *but only exclusively over the whole West*, and that it was due to a custom of the Church rather than a divine law.

[29] "The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895: A Reply to the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Reunion," *Orthodox Christian Information Center* (August 1895), http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1895.aspx.

[30] "The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895," §14.

[31] Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 80.

> The divine Fathers . . . gave him [the pope] the honorary prerogative of presidency, considering him simply as the bishop first in order, that is, first among equals.[32]

As for his status in relation to other bishops in Councils, they say that all bishops, including the bishop of Rome, "*were independent of each other and each entirely free within his own bounds, obeying only the syndical decrees, and they sat as equal one to another in synods.*"[33] He continues:

> But having recourse to the fathers and the Ecumenical Councils of the Church of the *first nine centuries*, we are fully persuaded that the Bishop of Rome was never considered as the supreme authority and infallible head of the Church, and that every bishop is head and president of his own particular Church . . . the Bishop of Rome being in no wise excepted from this rule, as Church history shows. . . . Each particular self-governing Church, both in the East and West, was totally independent and self-administered . . . *the Bishop of Rome having no right to interfere.*[34]

Surprisingly, some modern Orthodox theologians, conscious of the strong and substantial evidence for the office of universal primacy in the Roman See for the first millennium,[35] have sought to diverge from the doctrine of the two patriarchal encyclicals, and have asserted that Orthodox ecclesiology includes a divinely instituted primacy on the universal level, *and which includes jurisdictional prerogatives.*[36] The grounds for this are said to be in the imperial foundations for the primacy of Old Rome which gave Rome the status of being *first* in the *taxis of hierarchical*

---

[32] "The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895," §15.

[33] "The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895," §16. Some modern Orthodox theologians would perhaps critique the perspective of this famous encyclical as an overreaction to the First Vatican Council. For Orthodox critiques of this nature, see Vgenopoulos's *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II* and the two-volume set edited by Chryssavgis entitled *Primacy in the Church.* This intra-Orthodox debate on primacy will be addressed further below, but let me be clear that I prefer to take the statements on primacy which were made not by private theologians or semi-official texts, but from those official ecclesiastical texts which have been upheld by the Orthodox for a significant time.

[34] "The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895," §14 (emphasis added).

[35] For theological reasons, as well.

[36] See essays by Fr. Schmemann, Fr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis, and Archdeacon John Chryssavgis in *Primacy in the Church*, vol. 1.

*sees.* When Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, the new capital would naturally be adorned with the same status as Old Rome, since it is *New Rome.* Evidence of this can be found throughout the second millennium, but a new development of this intra-Orthodox controversy emerged in modern times with the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and its publication of a document on *Ecclesial Primacy* produced in Ravenna, Italy (2007). Recounting this and even more recent events should illustrate to the reader just where the controversy is on the matter of universal primacy in Orthodoxy.

It was at Ravenna that both East and West were brought together to place the issue of primacy on the table and discuss the different perspectives. The Ravenna agreement included the acceptance by the Orthodox participants of three levels of ecclesial organization:

1. local
2. regional
3. universal

As such, we have the *local level* of the diocese entrusted to the bishop; at the *regional level* is a group of local churches with their bishops who "recognize who is the first amongst themselves (Apostolic Canon 34)"; and at the *universal level,* where the bishops and primates around the world recognize one who is head (*protos*) among them.[37] While Orthodox theologians have had unanimous agreement on the existence of the three levels of ecclesiastical communion, there is current disagreement on the meaning and significance of the third level, the universal. For the Ravenna document, primacy and conciliarity are "mutually interdependent." If there is conciliarity, there must also be primacy. Effectively, conciliarity is activated in the setting of a synod, and therefore a synod

[37] Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority," *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* (Ravenna: Oct. 13, 2007), §10. http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese.html.

must have a primate who symbolically unites the synod into his singular person. Since it is obvious for the Orthodox that the local bishop has primacy in his diocese, the real concern is to understand the nature of primacy on the regional level and then ultimately on the universal level. The Ravenna document, despite its attesting to primacy on the universal level, left the precise definition of universal primacy for a future endeavor.[38]

This concludes the discussion in 2007. As is commonly known, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) had no participation in this meeting in Ravenna, and once the agreement was published, the ROC, headed by the Moscow patriarchate, took the opportunity to analyze the contents. In 2013, Moscow released a statement critiquing the Ravenna document.[39] In this statement, there is a clear attestation by the Russians to the primacy of the local bishop in his own diocese by divine institution[40] as well as the primacy of the metropolitan or patriarch as rooted in the canonical tradition of the Church. However, on the subject of primacy on the universal level, the Moscow statement attests to a canonical ordering in the sacred diptychs of churches and further specifies that this is *purely a primacy of honor with no jurisdiction or governmental prerogatives whatsoever.* Those canons which testify to the universal primacies "do not vest the primus (such as the bishop of Rome used to be at the time of ecumenical councils) with any powers *on the church-wide scale.*"[41] This last part which states that the universal primate has no investment from the canons of any powers with which to govern the universal Church is extremely important. The Moscow statement makes clear that the local bishop and the metropolitan or patriarch of the autocephalous body (regional communion) do have certain powers to govern their respective domains. In his local diocese, the bishop has "full power, sacramental, administrative and magisterial."[42] Quoting Apostolic Canon 39, the Moscow statement says:

---

[38] Joint International Commission, "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences," §46.

[39] Moscow Patriarchate, "Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church," *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*, Dec. 26, 2013, https://mospat.ru/en/2013/12/26/news96344/.

[40] It is extremely important to take note of this idea of divine institution (*jure divino*) as opposed to canonical institution (*jure canonico*), and even more so, man-made institution (*jure humano*).

[41] Moscow Patriarchate, "Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church," §1.3.

[42] Moscow Patriarchate, "Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church," §1.1.

> Let not the presbyters or deacons do anything *without the sanction of the bishop*; for he it is who is entrusted with the people of the Lord and of whom will be required the account of their souls.[43]

Similarly, on the regional level, the primate is invested with certain powers according to the Apostolic Canon 34 which says:

> The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things only which concern his own parish, and the country places which belong to it. But neither let him (who is the first) do anything without the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.[44]

Another canon which describes the same regional or metropolitical primacy is the ninth canon of the Council of Antioch (341), which refers to Apostolic Canon 34:

> It behooves the bishops in every province to acknowledge the bishop who presides in the metropolis, and who has to take thought for the whole province; because all men of business come together from every quarter to the metropolis. Wherefore it is decreed that he have precedence in rank, and that the other bishops do nothing extraordinary without him (according to the ancient canon which prevailed from [the times of] our Fathers).[45]

However, when we look for canons that empower a universal primate to govern the universal Church, we are left with nothing. The Russian

---

[43] The Apostolic Canons, "Canon 39," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm.

[44] The Apostolic Canons, "Canon 34," *New Advent*.

[45] Synod of Antioch in Encaeniis (A.D. 341), "Canon 9," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3805.htm.

Orthodox Church was keen to point this out. That there are canons which speak about the respective primacies of honor on a universal level is not denied,[46] but what is being stated by Moscow is that there are no investments of power by those canons through which the universal primates can act to govern the Church. The Orthodox theologians who support a universal primacy apply the canonical primacy that vests the regional primate (metropolitan, archbishop, patriarch) to the universal Primate, since it appears logically implicated. Quite shockingly, the Moscow statement calls this application of regional primatial prerogatives to a universal primate "*papism*":

> The ecclesiological distortions ascribing to the primus on the universal level the *functions of governance inherent in primates on other levels of church order* are named in the polemical literature of the second millennium as "papism."[47]

This does not go without a response. While he was Professor of Theology at the University of Thessaloniki and metropolitan of Bursa, the current archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOARCH), Elpidorphoros Lambriniadis, responded to Moscow in a short paper entitled *First Without Equals: A Response to the Text on Primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate.*[48] In this response, His Eminence Elpidorphoros not only defends the office of a primate on the third or universal level of ecclesial communion, as Ravenna stated, but goes even further in stating some specific prerogatives:

> In the case of the archbishop of Constantinople, we observe the unique concomitance of all three levels of primacy, namely the local (as Archbishop of Constantinople—New Rome), the regional (as Patriarch), and the universal or worldwide (as Ecumenical Patriarch). *This threefold primacy translates into specific privileges, such as the right of appeal and the right to grant or remove autocephaly.* . . . If

[46] Canon 6 of Nicaea (325), Canon 3 of Constantinople I (381), and Canon 28 of Chalcedon (451).

[47] Moscow Patriarchate, "Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church," §1.3.

[48] Elpidophoros Lambriniadis, Metropolitan of Bursa, "First Without Equals: A Response to the Text on Primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate," *Orthodoxy in Dialogue*, Feb. 12, 2014, https://orthodoxyindialogue.com/2019/01/22/the-ecumenical-patriarch-first-without-equals-by-metropolitan-elpidophoros-lambriniadis-of-bursa/.

> we are going to talk about the source of a primacy, then the source of such primacy is the very person of the Archbishop of Constantinople, who precisely as bishop is one "among equals," but as Archbishop of Constantinople, and thus as Ecumenical Patriarch is the *first without equals* (*primus sine paribus*).[49]

In response to this document, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev gave the following comments in his 2014 academic address to an audience at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary on the preparation for the "Great and Holy Council" to be assembled in Crete in 2016:

> For the first time has an Orthodox hierarch bluntly asserted that the Ecumenical Patriarch is not *primus inter pares*, but *primus sine paribus*, that is, like the pope in the West, he is elevated above all other primates of the local Orthodox churches. *This surely rings of an attempt to implant Roman Catholic ecclesiology on Orthodox soil.*[50]

Here there is an unmistakable contradiction being made between Metropolitan Hilarion, the Chairman of the Department of External Relations for the Moscow patriarchate, and the Metropolitan Elpidorphoros, who represents the understanding of the ecumenical patriarchate.[51] Furthermore, in that same academic address, Metropolitan Hilarion applies his understanding of primacy and conciliarity in the Orthodox Church to how the Great and Holy Council in Crete should be conducted, and then contrasts this with the Catholic understanding. This is very significant since the Orthodox hold councils as possessing the highest authority in the Church. The Council of Crete (2016) therefore serves as a recent moment in history where Orthodox ecclesiology is put into action. Metropolitan Hilarion states:

---

[49] Lambriniadis, "First Without Equals." In response to this, see Bishop Irenei Steenberg, "Primacy and Identity: A Response to 'First Without Equals' and the Tragedy of Deficient Ecclesiology," *Orthodox Christianity*, Oct. 31, 2018, https://orthochristian.com/116859.html.

[50] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, "Primacy in Preparation for the 2016 Great and Holy Council," *St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary*, November 8, 2019, https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/svsvoices/primacy_in_preparation_for_the_2016_great_and_holy_council (emphasis added).

[51] It is quite possible these two are talking past each other. Until further clarifications are made, inquirers are left to give their best interpretation of the affairs as they are publicly stated.

> It is of crucial importance that the decisions of the pan-Orthodox Council *will be taken by consensus, not by vote*, and that they will be approved by the entire assembly of bishops, not by a universal primate. This, again, points to a crucial difference between the Orthodox and the Catholic understandings of synodality and primacy. Catholic ecclesiology deems primacy, on its universal level, to be higher than synodality, because it is the pope who confirms the decisions of the council (synod); without his confirmation no decree of the council can be valid. For the Orthodox, *synodality is higher than primacy*, since the primate is subordinate to the council. At the regional level, it is one primate who is both subordinate and accountable to the regional synod, even though he convenes and presides over it. At the universal level it is a college of primates that is accountable to the rest of the bishops. The first hierarch of this college convenes the Council and presides over it, but together with other primates equal to him.[52]

Here the metropolitan is speaking in 2014, two years before the council actually convened in Crete. It should be noticed that the metropolitan says that the council will be taken by consensus and not by vote. This means that the decrees of councils should be accepted as valid only if they achieve a harmonious agreement between all the members of the council. Well, we are now in 2021, about five years after the council finished. Since then, we have had a considerable amount of time to review the event itself and how it was perceived by the Orthodox Church, given this strict rule of the need for consensus and unanimous agreement. Speaking to this matter, Metropolitan Timothy Ware, in a keynote address given at the IOTA Inaugural conference in Iasi, Romania, laments the outcome of the Great and Holy Council. He states:

> Sadly, the proceedings of the long-awaited Council turned out to be something of a disappointment. It was far from being pan-Orthodox. Of the fourteen Churches that comprise the worldwide Orthodox communion, *only ten attended.* The Churches of Antioch, Georgia, Bulgaria and Russia *chose for various reasons not to come.* The

[52] Alfeyev, "Primacy in Preparation for the 2016 Great and Holy Council."

> OCA (Orthodox Church in America) was not invited. The absence of the Russian Church was particularly damaging; it was also a surprise, for until the last moment the Patriarchate of Moscow had taken an active and positive part in the preparations.[53]

Metropolitan Timothy also observes the oddity of the rule for consensus rather than majority vote. He says:

> Another point of difference between Crete and the Ecumenical Councils was that at Crete, so it was decided beforehand, decisions should be reached, not by majority vote as at the Ecumenical Councils, *but by consensus*."[54]

This need for consensus appears to be *sine qua non* for a successful council.[55] It is without much surprise that Fr. Joseph Ratzinger, writing nearly thirty years before the Council of Crete convened, predicted that such a criterion of consensus would be an insurmountable roadblock to the Orthodox Church actually having a successful council. Fr. Ratzinger writes:

> What is assumed here is that the council, *the harmony of all the local Churches*, is at the same time the only form of expression of the universal Church qua universal Church, its only constitutional organ. I have already pointed out in the preceding contribution on the Anglican-Catholic dialogue that *one cannot see how under such conditions a universal council could come into being at all.* The difficulties which

[53] International Orthodox Theological Association, "Keynote Address by Kallistos (Ware) at IOTA 2019 Conference," *YouTube*, January 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WexUpqstG9Q&feature=youtu.be; quotations taken from transcript provided by *Orthodox Christianity*, http://orthochristian.com/118652.html.

[54] Orthodox Theological Association, "Keynote Address."

[55] Interestingly enough, in the address given by Metropolitan Timothy, he recognized that none of the Great Seven Ecumenical Councils achieved "consensus" understood as "perfect harmony" by all the bishops and churches. Rather, dispensing with all the other alternatives for an external criterion for the ecumenicity of councils, Metropolitan Timothy is left with suggesting that the "reception theory" as construed by Alexei Khomyakov is the only explanation. This comes from his Florovsky lecture at Fordham University, which can be accessed at Fordham's YouTube channel; see "The Decisive Importance of Councils in the Life of the Church with Metropolitan Kallistos," *YouTube*, July 20, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVp3CVJqFq8.

> the Eastern Church is facing on the road to a pan-Orthodox synod provide a quite concrete verification of this problem. In fact the Church of the Fathers never saw itself as a pure combination of particular Churches with equal rights.[56]

Enough has been said on the perspective of the Moscow patriarchate versus the Constantinopolitan patriarchate in terms of theory. The matter has arisen to the level of practicality in even more recent times. Even though the discussions on primacy have almost always had the historic church of Rome in perspective, it is obvious that a minor goal in all of these deliberations has been to defend the primatial prerogatives of the patriarchal See of Constantinople as the First Hierarch in the Orthodox Church. We can say that the Ravenna document, which represents the progress between Catholics and Orthodox on the subject of primacy, has indirectly caused a new stage of debate within the Orthodox Church, and Constantinople is right at the heart.

This is especially pertinent since the cataclysmic decision of the current Patriarch Bartholomew to grant autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. As can be expected, the church of Moscow has connected this Ukrainian invasion on the part of Constantinople with her supposed papist ecclesiology. As late as November of 2019, in an address reported by *Pravmir*, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, wrote to plead with Patriarch Bartholomew in order to change his mind and reverse course in Ukraine. Speaking to this "invasion" of Constantinople into the internal affairs of the church of Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill accuses Bartholomew of *papism* and of misapplying the canons that prescribe Constantinople primacy.[57]

In any case, one can see clearly that there is nothing close to unanimity on the subject of primacy in Orthodoxy, and the spectrum ranges as far as, on one hand, admitting there is a universal primacy with authoritative prerogatives, and on the other hand, rejecting such a thing altogether. The value of these observations is indispensable for the readers of this book as they compare the survey of history side by side with the contemporary situation in Orthodoxy. And yet, while the aforesaid is true, the Orthodox have also turned the tables on the Catholic critic

[56] Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (Middlegreen, UK: St. Paul Publications, 1987), 93 (emphasis added).

[57] Patriarch Kirill, "'It Is Not Too Late to Stop': A Sorrowful Reply to Patriarch Bartholomew Concerning His Anti-Canonical Actions in Ukraine," *Orthodox Christianity*, Jan. 1, 2019, http://orthochristian.com/118371.html.

who might mistake the decentralized form of government in Orthodoxy as a fatal problem. What happens if a particular Roman Pontiff turns against the Church and perhaps uses his magisterial office in ways that threaten the apostolic faith? Is it not quite natural in this state for clergy and theologians to turn to the Tradition and the consensus of the whole Church as a basis of their appeals to the Apostolic See to look again at its decrees? And in this scenario, we see that there is a use for the members of the Church expressing concern over the Church's faith. More information will be given on this in the below investigation of Popes Vigilius and Honorius.

## *Chapter Five*

# Primacy in the Catholic Church

ONE DISSIMILARITY between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, among many others, is that no Catholic inquirer is left to figure out what exactly is taught on the subject of papal primacy. The Latin West is both known and criticized for its commitment to issuing doctrinal decrees and formulas. The criticism is that the West appears to think it can use man's reason to contain the mysteries of God, leaving no room for the unknown or unanswerable. Be that as it may, there are more ways than one in which this commitment to explanatory clarity proves useful, and Catholicism's clarity on papal primacy is certainly one of them. The only drawback is that there is an enormous amount of magisterial treatment on the papacy, and this book has a small space to explain such a vast doctrine.[1] No choice is left but to give a semi-detailed summary, and then clear away common misunderstandings. A good place to start is the Council of Florence (1439) in its decree on papal authority as a basic summation of Catholic teaching:

> Likewise, we define that the holy apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff have the *primacy over the whole world*, and that the same Roman Pontiff is the *successor of St. Peter*, the

[1] For both a general overview and extensive study, I recommend J. Michael Miller, C.S.B, *The Shepherd and the Rock: Origins, Development, and Mission of the Papacy* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1995).

> prince of the apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, *the head of the whole Church*, the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him, in the person of St. Peter, was given by our Lord Jesus Christ the *full power* of feeding, ruling, and governing the whole Church as is also contained in the acts of the ecumenical *councils and in the sacred canons.*[2]

What is significant here is that the council states that the Petrine supremacy is contained in the councils and canons. Secondly, this decree was accepted by both Latin and Greek together in an ecumenical council. One should not have to look further to ascertain whether this is true or not. The below commentary seeks to investigate this field of data for that precise endeavor. If a sufficient case is made for this, then the Decree of Florence is a landmark moment since it utilizes a synodal decree to define the papacy that is grounded in history and the Church Fathers. If the contemporary Orthodox Church runs into conflict with this decree, then it runs into conflict with the patristic heritage as well. While Florence includes a clear summary of the Catholic position on the papacy, the First Vatican Council has a fuller treatment of the precise nature and extent of this authority in its decree *Pastor Aeternus*. Some statements from it will surely prove this:

> In order that the episcopate itself might be *one and undivided*, and that the whole multitude of believers might be preserved in unity of faith and communion by means of a closely united priesthood, He placed St. Peter at the head of the other apostles, and established in him a *perpetual principle and visible foundation of this twofold unity*, in order that on his strength an everlasting temple might be erected and on the firmness of his faith a Church might arise whose pinnacle was to reach into heaven.[3]

---

[2] "The Primacy of the Roman Pontiff," in *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, eds. J. Neuner, S.J., and J. Dupuis, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1975), 215 (emphasis added).

[3] "Fourth Session: Dogmatic Constitution Pastor Aeternus on the Church of Christ," in *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, eds. J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1975), 220 (emphasis added); also see "Decrees of the First Vatican Council," *Papal Encyclicals Online*, Session 4, July 18, 1870, §4, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm.

This here sketches the basic logic of the papal office. In order for the episcopate to remain one and undivided, Christ is said to have instituted the Petrine headship. St. Peter, and his successor, is the "perpetual principle" of the unity of the episcopate, and therefore the unity of the whole Church. More specifically, the need for the Church to retain its external and visible unity is evidence that there should be a means to provide that need, and this serves as grounds for the papal institution. The concept of permanency is vital to Catholicism's teaching on the Church and the papacy. The decree goes on to say:

> Now, what Christ the Lord, the Prince of Shepherds and the great Shepherd of the flock, established in the person of the blessed apostle Peter for the perpetual safety and everlasting good of the Church must, by the will of the same, endure without interruption in the Church, which was founded on the rock and which will remain firm until the end of the world.[4]

One cannot miss the fact that *permanency* is the driving motivation of God's design for a visible government in the Church. The opposite of permanency is short-lived or temporary. Our Lord said, "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."[5] Before ascending into heaven, and thus removing his visible presence from the world of man, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age."[6] From these two passages, we see that Christ's Church must remain permanent and last until the end of time. The question that arises is how will the Church remain as it was when Christ founded it? When things are left in the hands of men, our fragile natures tend to change things. We are transitory, and God is immutable.

But Christ entrusted the mission of the Church to transitory men. Was he not aware that men are prone to weakness and destruction? Perish the thought! He promised, "I will be with you always." The Catholic Church

[4] "Fourth Session: Dogmatic Constitution Pastor Aeternus on the Church of Christ," in *The Christian Faith*, eds. Neuner and Dupuis, 222.

[5] Matt 16:16–18.

[6] Matt 28:18–20.

sees in this a promise of divine assistance to the men chosen to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ. It is anything but the sort of "let go, let God" mentality that pervades the current denominationalism in Protestantism. All things must be done, as Paul said, "decently and in order."[7]

Since the mission includes making disciples, the assistance provided must involve a supernatural protection of the teaching school that Christ created with his holy Apostles. This means that the doctrine of that school must remain intact, neither adding nor subtracting from it. While each of the baptized are supernaturally illuminated to believe the truth of the Gospel, there is a general fallibility to man's evaluation of reality and, especially, divine Revelation. In order to therefore maintain the integrity of the original school of Christ and the ecclesial institution that he created with the Apostles, the Lord established a visible government for the Church. Already in the New Testament, we see it is noticeably clear that the Apostles themselves were shepherds, teachers, and judges on matters related to the teaching and discipline of the Church. The earliest example is the Council of Jerusalem (49), where the Judaizer controversy was resolved. It was the Apostles gathered together in council who judged it unnecessary to circumcise Gentiles and to impose upon them the Law of Moses as necessary for inclusion into the covenant of salvation. A letter was drawn up at the council and was delivered abroad. This would be an early example of a magisterial document from the apostolic government of the Church.

As is known, the Apostles were more than one in number. They were *the Twelve*. In order to maintain a principle of unity or oneness, lest the Apostles became separated into different factions, one of the them was given a priority of position, a position of authority, in order to lead the others. The idea here is that where you have more than one will, which has the potential to divide from the others, there is the possibility of schism and fragmentation. The Church, however, must remain visibly one. In order to secure this unity, St. Peter was chosen by the Lord as chief and head of the whole Apostolic College, such that all the Apostles might know their responsibility to never break from St. Peter's primacy. The logic here is not late medieval. St. Jerome (347–420), who taught that St. Peter took the lead authority at the Council of Jerusalem (49),[8] had already taught this concept in the fourth century when he said:

---

7 1 Cor 14:40.

8 From Jerome to Augustine (A.D. 404), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley (Buffalo, NY:

> But you say, the Church was founded upon Peter: although elsewhere the same is attributed to all the Apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the Church depends upon them all alike, *yet one among the twelve is chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism.*[9]

Again, he writes:

> The well-being of a Church depends upon the dignity of its chief-priest, and unless some *extraordinary and unique functions* be assigned to him, we shall have *as many schisms in the Churches as there are priests.*[10]

St. Optatus of Milevis (fourth century) writes even before St. Jerome:

> "Peter, the Head of all the Apostles (for which reason he was called Cephas)" was given the chair or cathedra "that, in this one cathedra, unity should be preserved by all, lest the other Apostles might claim—each for himself —separate cathedras, so that he who should set up a second cathedra against the unique cathedra would already be a schismatic and a sinner."[11]

It cannot be denied that these fathers are saying that having a single head creates a principle of unity to which the many must adhere in order to maintain unity. If the one occupying the chair is surpassed or made

---

Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102075.htm.

[9] Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* (Book I), §26, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/30091.htm. Notice that, for St. Jerome, as other Fathers, St. Peter is equal to the Apostles qua Apostles, but insofar as he is the principle of unity, and therefore primate, he is unequal.

[10] Jerome, The Dialogue Against the Luciferians, §9, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3005.htm.

[11] Optatus of Mileve, *Against the Donatists*, Book II, §2, in *The Works of St. Optatus*, trans. Oliver Rodie Vassall-Phillips (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), 34, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/optatus_00_intro.htm.

superfluous, it becomes open season for schism. Obedience, therefore, to the one head is the remedy for schism. St. Cyprian of Carthage made this plain:

> For neither have heresies arisen, nor have schisms originated, from any other source than from this, *that God's priest is not obeyed*; nor do they consider that there is *one person* for the time priest in the Church, and for the time *judge in the stead of Christ*; whom, if, according to divine teaching, *the whole fraternity should obey*.[12]

Here, St. Cyprian is speaking about the local church needing to be obedient to the bishop, and that the origin of schism lies in the failure to do just this. While St. Cyprian is thinking of the position of the local bishop over his diocese, it serves as a principle to apply at the universal level. Commenting on the passages above by St. Jerome, the patristics scholar Fr. John Chapman (1865–1933) made a quite straightforward observation that illustrates this concept:

> Since he declares that a primate was necessary even among the Apostles, and that without a monarchy over the priests of one city there "will be as many schisms as there are priests," it follows that he must *a fortiori* believe in the necessity of a primacy over the universal Church.[13]

And since, as with the local bishop, being a principle of unity requires the power and authority to unify, the First Vatican Council states:

> Hence We teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a sovereignty of ordinary power over all other Churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate . . . so that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme Pastor, through the preservation

[12] Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 54, §5, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050654.htm.

[13] Fr. John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), 110.

> of unity, both of communion and of profession of the same faith, with the Roman Pontiff.[14]

This power of jurisdiction is not just universal, but it is also *immediate*, *direct*, and *ordinary*. This means that no medium can stand between the authority of the pope and all members of the Church everywhere. The logic here comes from the fact that since the Lord Jesus Christ gave to St. Peter the mission to shepherd the universal flock, there is required no permission from anyone else in the Church for St. Peter to act upon this responsibility. It is a mission given directly to St. Peter from the King of kings, and therefore, the successors of St. Peter have the license to govern the Church everywhere with a power of jurisdiction, without the need of permission or grant from an inferior. Nothing can stand in the way of obedience to Christ and his command to St. Peter, otherwise it would be a mediated primacy through the Church or its canons.

As will be shown, the Orthodox Church conceives primacy as an ecclesial principle that is regulated through canons and therefore is mediated through the canonical legislation of the Church. For Catholics, the institution of primacy is by divine institution and directly from Christ himself and so is logically prior to councils and canons. Lastly, as being possessed of such authority, the Roman pontiff is the final judge on all matters relating to the Church's doctrine on faith or morals, as well as to its discipline. Since the Church cannot be "overcome," per the promise of Christ, the final judge on matters of doctrine must be preserved from leading the Church into soul-destroying heresies. Because of this, the First Vatican Council states:

> This gift, then, of truth and never-failing faith was conferred by heaven upon Peter and his successors in this Chair, that they might perform their high office for the salvation of all; that the whole flock of Christ, kept away by them from the poisonous food of error, might be nourished with the pasture of heavenly doctrine; that, the occasion of schism being removed, the whole Church might be kept one, and resting in its foundation, might stand firm against the gates of hell.[15]

[14] *The Decrees of the Vatican Council*, ed. Vincent McNabb (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1907), 40.

[15] McNabb, ed., *The Decrees of the Vatican Council*, 46.

This much summarizes the Catholic position on the primacy in the Church. The driving concept is *permanency*, *unity*, and *continuity*. The means of sustaining these key attributes of the Church, a primacy of authority, jurisdiction, and doctrinal infallibility are set in place in order to perpetually strengthen the Church from falling into a division of schismatic bodies. This does not entail, however, that the authority of the pope is a blank check for whatever it is the pope wants to do. *Pastor Aeternus* clearly states, "the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by His revelation they might make known new doctrine, but that by His assistance they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith delivered through the Apostles."[16] When asked about the extent of the pope's power, Fr. Joseph Ratzinger said the pope is the "guarantor of obedience, so that the Church cannot simply do as she likes. The pope himself cannot even say, I am the Church, or I am tradition, *but he is, on the contrary, under constraint*: he incarnates this constraint laid upon the Church. . . . The pope is thus not the instrument through which one could, so to speak, call a different Church into existence, but is a protective barrier against arbitrary action."[17] Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former prefect of the CDF,[18] echoes Fr. Ratzinger's words with the following:

> The fullness of apostolic authority does not imply an unlimited fullness of power in the secular sense. Rather, this power is *strictly limited by its purpose.* It stands at the service of the preservation of the Church's unity in her faith in God's Son. . . . It is, then, clear that the Pope's words are *at the service of the whole Tradition* of the Church, and not the other way around.[19]

Papal power is limited "by its purpose." Thus, if the purpose of the papal office is to maintain the continuity of apostolic doctrine, then introducing a discontinuity is outside of the scope of the pope's authority. Even the Apostles, who were supremely infallible and authoritative in the Church, had no authority to depart from the deposit given to them

[16] McNabb, ed., *The Decrees of the Vatican Council*, 45.

[17] Joseph Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 377.

[18] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

[19] Gerhard Ludwig Müller, "By What Authority: On the Teaching Office of the Pope," *First Things*, Jan. 16, 2018, https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/01/by-what-authority.

by the Lord. The pope's authority, therefore, is limited by its goal, and is not a blank check for whatever the pope thinks for himself. Rather, by the providential protection of the Holy Spirit, God restricts the teaching ministry of the pope from introducing substantial errors that would mislead the people of God.

For the purpose of clarity, it should be asked whether the pope's infallibility is absolute. The Orthodox have, at times, criticized the claim of papal infallibility because there are times in history when a pope erred in faith. Clarity comes from the official *Relatio* on Infallibility at Vatican I which was given by Bishop Vincent Ferrer Gasser. He states:

> I reply and openly admit: in no sense is pontifical infallibility absolute, because absolute infallibility belongs to God alone, Who is the first and essential truth and Who is never able to deceive or be deceived. All other infallibility, as communicated for a specific purpose, has its limits and its conditions under which it is considered to be present. The same is valid in reference to the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff. For this infallibility is bound by certain limits and conditions.[20]

If papal infallibility is limited by certain conditions, then there are general conditions where the pope is not infallible. If the Orthodox insist on papal failures in these general conditions, then their accusations do not penetrate enough to successfully show the decree of papal infallibility to be incorrect. What are the conditions for Pontifical infallibility, as Gasser calls it? He writes:

> Therefore, in reality, the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff is restricted by reason of the subject, that is when the Pope, constituted in the chair of Peter, the center of the Church, *speaks as universal teacher and supreme judge*: it is restricted by reason of the object i.e., when treating of *matters of faith and morals*; and by reason of the act itself, i.e., *when the Pope defines what must be believed or rejected by all the faithful.*[21]

[20] Bishop Vincent Ferrer Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility*, trans. Rev. James T. O'Connor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 49.

[21] Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility*, 49.

Simply put, when the pope exercises his office of universal teacher and defines a doctrine that must be held as a condition for one's communion with the Church, according to Gasser, the "quality and condition of the acts of infallible definition is that the pope speaks *ex cathedra*. This term is received in the schools, and its meaning is defined as follows: 'When the pope speaks not as a private doctor, or as a bishop of a diocese, but as exercising the office of *supreme pastor and teaching of all Christians*.' Moreover, not every way suffices for the promulgating a doctrine, even as supreme pastor and teaching; but there must be the intention manifested of defining a doctrine, or of *putting an end to controversy on some doctrine*, by giving a definitive sentence, and propounding that doctrine as to be held by the universal Church."[22] Bishop William B. Ullathorne (1806–1889), who was involved in the production of *Pastor Aeternus*, expounded on the decree of papal infallibility when he returned to the diocese of Birmingham (UK) in a pastoral letter to his flock. He wrote:

> The definition does not extend infallibility to the private teaching of the Pope, still less to his conversation, or to his ordinary actions, or to his political functions, or to his judgment of causes as between man and man. To nothing of this kind does it reach; they are excluded by the very terms. It is only when he exercises a *certain office in a certain way* that he declared to speak without error . . . when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor *of all Christians*, by virtue of his *supreme apostolic authority*.[23]

Not only is papal infallibility restricted to these conditions, but the content of the pope's decree is also restricted. This is how the bishops at the First Vatican Council understood *Pastor Aeternus*. To this point, we have a record of the Pastoral Instruction of Swiss bishops (1871) published to their faithful just after the First Vatican Council. They wrote:

---

[22] Dom Cuthbert Butler, *The Vatican Council 1869–1870: Based on Bishop Ullathorne's Letters* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1962), 393 (emphasis added).

[23] Butler, *The Vatican Council*, 456 (emphasis added). Lest it be mistaken, the Catholic faithful are still obliged to submit to the pope's authentic teaching even when he isn't speaking *ex cathedra*, and they are bound to give the content of his decrees religious assent of mind and will; see Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, by Pope Paul VI (November 21, 1964), §25, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

> The Pope is infallible *solely and exclusively* when, as supreme doctor of the Church, he pronounces in a matter of faith or morals a definition which has to be accepted and held as obligatory by all the faithful. . . . *It in no way depends upon the caprice of the Pope or upon his good pleasure,* to make such and such a doctrine the object of a dogmatic definition: *he is tied up and limited to the divine revelation,* and to the *truths which that revelation contains; he is tied up and limited by the Creeds already in existence,* and by the *preceding definitions of the Church; he is tied up and limited by the divine law and by the constitution of the Church.*[24]

[24] Butler, *The Vatican Council*, 464. In modern times, there is a tendency by Catholics to say that there are, in fact, only two times when the pope has spoken *ex cathedra* (*Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854 and *Munificentissimus Deus* in 1950). But this seems far too restrictive. However, there is good reason also to caution giving too great a number to how many *ex cathedra* utterances there have been. Bishop Josef Fessler (1813–1872), who cared for the diocese of Sankt Pölten and was remarkably the General Secretary of the First Vatican Council, wrote a lengthy work explaining the true nature of papal infallibility and the *ex cathedra* condition in his *The True and False Infallibility of the Popes: A Controversial Reply to Dr. Schulte* (New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1875), translated from the third French edition by Fr. St. John of the Oratory, who, Dom Cuthbert Butler says, was a close friend of St. John H. Newman (*The Vatican Council*, 459). In his *True and False Infallibility of the Popes*, Fessler asserts that he and his theological faculty could only find a "few" *ex cathedra* utterances (*The True and False Infallibility of the Popes*, 66), and the whole book was on the limited and restricted nature of the *ex cathedra* conditionality. This is debatable, of course, but it should also be noted that his book, after being translated into Italian, was personally confirmed by Pope Pius IX himself. The pope wrote a brief addressed to Fessler lauding his book, and the Latin and English of the pope's words are provided in the prefix to the above English edition. The pope may not agree with Fessler's comment that only a "few" *ex cathedra* utterances could be found, but the general idea of his book, that *ex cathedra* is a rarity, is confirmed by the pope. Also, it should not be forgotten that while the First Vatican Council chose to speak on the conditions for the infallibility of the pope's extraordinary exercise of his pontifical authority in teaching doctrine via *ex cathedra*, it says nothing of the possible charisms assisting him in his ordinary exercise of teaching the worldwide Church. St. John Paul II taught the following on the ordinary magisterium of the pope in his General Audience, Wednesday (March 24, 1993), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19930324.html: "Alongside this infallibility of *ex cathedra* definitions, there is the charism of assistance of the Holy Spirit, granted to Peter and his successors *so that they do not err in matters of faith and morals* and instead give good illumination to the Christian people. This charism is not limited to exceptional cases, but embraces the entire exercise of the magisterium to varying degrees." And thus, it would appear that there is a general protection against error even in the ordinary magisterium of the pope. However, this general gift of divine assistance has, at least, less of a guarantee from reformability. In the same audience, St. John Paul II says the pope "does not possess it as if he could dispose of it or count it in every circumstance, but only 'when he speaks from the chair,'" and so there is a special certainty of *ex cathedra*

Far from thinking that the pope has within his grasp the authority to take the Church into any direction he pleases, he is "tied down," to the already existing divine Revelation as passed down through the Church's magisterium. He, therefore, has no freedom to modify the Tradition of the Church. And, lest we think this is the opinion of just the Swiss bishops, Dom Cuthbert Butler recounts how Pope Pius IX (1846–1878), responding to this Pastoral Instruction, "wrote to the Swiss bishops that nothing could be *more opportune* or more *worthy of praise*, or *cause the truth to stand out more clearly*."[25] Right from the pope himself we have it confirmed that papal infallibility "is not a blank check that gives the pope unlimited teaching authority; formal conditions carefully circumscribe its use."[26] Furthermore, as to the further limits of papal authority, Pius IX wrote an Apostolic Letter to the German episcopate in 1875 in order to help refute a certain erroneous interpretation of the First Vatican Council held by the German chancellor Otto Von Bismarck. In 1871, Bismarck launched a *Kulturkampf* ("culture war") in Prussia, which persecuted Catholics because of their potential threat to the civil government. Bismarck had understood *Pastor Aeternus* to equip the pope with so much authority in every diocese that the pope could go so far as alleviating Catholics anywhere from cooperating with the state government by the invention of new and arbitrary teachings which were not part of the deposit of faith. In other words, Bismarck understood Vatican I to have absorbed every diocesan bishop's authority into the single hands of the pope.

In his letter, Pius IX defends the reaction of the German episcopate in their refutation of Bismarck's false interpretation in their decree entitled "Collective Statement of the German Episcopate concerning the Circular of the German Imperial Chancellor in respect of the Coming Papal Election." They said that "the opinion according to which the pope is 'an absolute sovereign because of his infallibility' is based on a completely false understanding of the dogma of Papal Infallibility." Moreover, they added that the pope's magisterium "is restricted to the contents of Holy Scripture and Tradition and also to the dogmas previously defined by the teaching authority of the Church."[27] The German bishops also state that it

definitions. Lastly, *ex cathedra* teachings are more plentiful than what some theologians think today.

[25] Butler, *The Vatican Council*, 465.

[26] Patrick Granfield, *The Limits of the Papacy* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), 69.

[27] Müller, "By What Authority"; see also Müller, "Statement on the Limits of Papal Authority,"

"is in virtue of the same divine institution upon which the papacy rests that the episcopate also exists. It, too, has its rights and duties because of the ordinance of God Himself, and the pope has neither the right nor the power to change them. Consequently, it is a complete misunderstanding of the Vatican decrees to believe that 'episcopal jurisdiction has been absorbed into the papal,'"[28] or that bishops are "mere functionaries with no personal responsibility."[29] Dom Olivier Rousseau, the Benedictine monk of Chevetogne Monastery in Belgium, summarizes the decree of the German episcopate against Bismarck with the following seven points, which the Eastern Orthodox reader especially should pay extra care to:

1. The pope cannot claim the episcopal rights for himself or substitute his own authority for that of the bishops.

2. Episcopal jurisdiction is not subsumed within papal jurisdiction.

3. The entire fullness of episcopal authority was not put into the pope's hands by the decrees of the [First] Vatican Council.

4. He has not in principle taken the place of each individual bishop.

5. He cannot at any given moment put himself in the place of the bishop vis-à-vis governments.

6. The bishops did not become instruments of the pope.

7. They are not the officials of a foreign sovereign, vis-à-vis governments.[30]

---

in *Roman Encounters: The Unity of the Faith and the Holy See's Responsibility for the Universal Church*, trans. Susan Johnson (Irondale, AL: EWTN Publishing, Inc., 2019), 230–31.

[28] "Collective Declaration by the German Hierarchy (1875)," in *The Christian Faith*, eds. Neuner and Dupuis, 228 (emphasis added).

[29] F. Donald Logan, "The 1875 Statement of the German Bishops on Episcopal Powers," *The Jurist* 21 no. 3 (July 1961), 286, citation taken from *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity*, by John R. Quinn (New York: Herder and Herder Co., 1999), 79.

[30] *Una Sancta* 12 (1957), 227, cited in *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, by Ratzinger, eds. Peter Hünermann and Thomas Söding, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008), 17. German translation from Rousseau's French provided.

Pope Pius IX described these as "the true meaning of the Vatican decrees."[31] He goes on: "Your declaration gives *the genuine Catholic doctrine*, which is also that of the holy Council and of this holy See; it defends it with illuminating and irrefutable reasoning, and sets it out so clearly that it is plain to any honest man that there is no innovation in the definitions attacked."[32] The pope of the First Vatican Council himself clarifies that the episcopal government is of divine institution and the papal government does not swallow the former up. Both the episcopal office and the papal office are equally of divine institution, and one cannot overshadow the other. Both share the vocation to disciple the world and work together, as head and members, as one college.[33] Surprisingly, there is also a testimony from the Second Vatican Council. During the final editing of *Lumen Gentium*, Pope St. Paul VI suggested the statement that the pope is "answerable to the Lord alone" should be added to §22. However, the Council's Theological Commission rejected this by noting, "The Roman Pontiff is also bound to revelation itself, to the fundamental structure of the Church, to the sacraments, to the definitions of earlier councils, and other obligations too numerous to mention."[34]

Another misunderstanding that arises from the Church's decree on papal authority and infallibility is the question of councils. If the pope has the authority that the Vatican Council said he does, it stands in contradiction to the first millennium which had confronted ecclesiastical disputes through council and not papal fiat. To answer this, we should call to mind that both Vatican Councils make it clear that the bishops

[31] Olivier Rousseau, "Le vraie valeur de l'épiscopat dans l'Église d'après d'importants documents de 1875," *Irénikon* 29 (1956): 121–42, translated by Granfield in *The Limits of the Papacy*, 116n21. Granfield references Denzinger, 3112–17, which also has Pius IX's letter to the German bishops. See Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, trans. by Mary John Ronayne and Mary Cecily Boulding, ed. Denis Minns (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 97n3.

[32] "Apostolic Brief of Pius IX on March 6, 1875," in *The Christian Faith*, eds. Neuner and Dupuis, 228 (emphasis added). See also Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy*, 80. Pius IX solemnly ratified the German bishops' decree on a second occasion at a consistory of cardinals in March 1875.

[33] Karl Rahner, S.J., "The Episcopate and the Primacy," in *Inquiries* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 303–94.

[34] Avery Dulles, S.J., "Moderate Infallibility," in *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, ed. Paul C. Empie, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 87. Dulles' citation: "Schema of July 1964," 93; also in G. Alberigo and F. Magistretti, *Constitutionis dogmaticae Lumen gentium synopsis historica* (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 1975) and *Relationes commissionis doctrinalis* (July–Oct. 1964), 456. For discussion see K. Rahner's remarks in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 1.202; Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 310n14.

of the churches are *co-judges* together with the pope. In Session III of Vatican I, Pope Pius IX himself states clearly that he is teaching from the Chair of Peter with the bishops of the whole world as "*fellow judges*" and "*co-assessors*." In *Lumen Gentium*, we read that in the gift of infallibility pertaining to the bishops of the Church when "assembled in an ecumenical council, they are, for the universal Church, *teachers* of and *judges* in matters of faith and morals, whose decisions must be adhered to with the loyal and obedient assent of faith."[35] Moreover, the same document states, "The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme teaching office."[36] In the current Code of Canon Law, Canon 341, §1: "The decrees of an ecumenical council do not oblige unless they are approved by the Roman Pontiff *as well as by the Fathers of the Council*, confirmed by the Roman Pontiff, and promulgated at his direction."[37] Ecumenical councils, then, are a *joint effort* between the head and members of the episcopal college. Together, their deliberations and judgments amount to an act of supreme authority over the universal Church.

Historically speaking, even far past the Greek and Latin schism, the Council of Florence was not simply an audience to hear the pope speak. There were great Latin theologians who aptly defended the Apostolic Tradition, and the Greek delegates were equally given their space to speak. If, as certain Eastern Orthodox critiques of the papacy sometimes make it seem, the pope were the sole infallible and autocratic rule of faith whose opinion alone matters, why did Pope Eugene IV suffer the council's open space of discussion? Furthermore, one would only have to study the Council of Trent to see precisely the same thing. All the decrees of this council, whether they were on the Canon of Scripture, soteriological justification, the sacraments, transubstantiation, the priesthood, marriage, purgatory, invocation of the saints, relics, or indulgences, were discussed by all the bishops present. Could it be that the Latins at Florence and Trent did not believe in papacy? When we hear from critics who say that if the papacy were true, why would they not all just have the pope alone write a decree all by himself? They are asking this question because their understanding of the papacy is a distorted or imbalanced one and thus their objections are hindered by a certain caricature.

A common instance is seen in the following question: "If the early Church was papal, why didn't every single dispute, problem, and

[35] *LG*, §25.

[36] *LG*, §25.

[37] *Code of Canon Law* (Piccadilly, London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983), 59.

doctrinal question get resolved by the simple stroke of his pen on a single letter?" The assumption behind the question is that the Catholic doctrine of the papacy posits a certain omniscience and automation to the pope. *Papal omniscience* would be the idea that the pope knows all there is to know about the Apostolic Tradition and therefore already has the answer to every doctrinal question possible. *Papal automation* follows from this in that the pope should automatically answer rightly and resolve the dispute single-handedly. Both assumptions are false, and so the question proceeds on the wrong foot. Nothing about the papal doctrine requires that a pope know everything there is to know about the Christian faith, nor that he should both know and resolve automatically by way of instant cognition.

The papal doctrine simply asserts that *if and when* the pope arrives at a confident understanding and proceeds to define doctrine infallibly, the decree will not contain an error. He may obtain this confidence through the deliberation of a council, and that seems to be the constant and unwavering practice for two thousand years. The mistake often made when outsiders read about the prerogatives of the pope is that they immediately think that the supreme authoritative capacity should be active without any form of cooperation or involvement of the episcopate or even the whole Church. However, just because a certain subject has a certain capacity does not mean that it is ordinarily supposed to function at its very highest capacity.

Even in the lives of the strongest popes in history is this realty shown. Pope St. Nicholas I (858–867), who made unmistakable claims to papal infallibility,[38] responded to Eastern criticisms of the *Filioque* by writing to Hincmar of Reims and Luibert of Mainz, requesting refutations from German synods against the Greeks.[39] As the faulty objection goes, why didn't St. Nicholas simply resolve it with a stroke of his own pen? Or how about the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* (1581–1607), which was a commission set up by Pope Clement VIII that lasted more than twenty years. The pope sought the argumentation of theologians on the doctrinal question standing between the Dominicans and the Jesuits on grace and human freedom. The pope who closed the commission, Paul V, was not confident in making a final decision and permitted both schools to hold their

[38] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 160.

[39] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105

own opinions. In fact, there has not really been a conclusive decree on this even to the present day in 2021. If we were to carry the false assumption of papal omniscience or automation, then we would be curious as to why Clement VIII or Paul V could not, with a single stroke of their pens, resolve either dispute.

The popes have always understood that their job is to preserve the faith, and that comes with recognizing that the faith precedes them and precedes them by being deposited and diffused throughout time and space in the Scriptures, Tradition, ecumenical councils, and the *sensus fidelium*. They are the chief students of this faith, and therefore it behooves them, before proceeding to make definitive judgments, to consult the infallible sources where the Holy Spirit marked his signature. A perfect example of this is Pope Pius IX's 1863 decree *Tuas Libenter*, where he says that we are to hold those teachings as pertaining to the faith, not only the decrees of the councils but the "*universal and constant consensus of the Catholic Theologians.*"[40] One would only have to see what the popes of recent history have said about the indispensable nature of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas. He is practically a rule of Catholic faith. The papacy is not the monopoly on the Holy Spirit, therefore. God has illuminated the minds of even laypersons who end up teaching the official hierarchy of the Church. St. Maximus the Confessor (580–662), St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1379), St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582), and St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897) are just some examples of that. The magisterium of the Church is ordered to observe the truth of God as it has permeated the entire people of God throughout history.

Even in most recent history, the practice of the papacy is to pay heed to the moral consensus of the whole Church. In fact, two *ex cathedra*[41] statements issued in recent history were both preceded by a census taken of the whole episcopate. Popes Pius IX and Pius XII collected letters from all the bishops of the world in favor of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary before issuing their decrees. With that said, this does not take away from the claim of *Pastor Aeternus* that the pope can, on certain conditions, enact a doctrinal decree which, of itself, is supremely authoritative and infallible.

When the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, his teaching is unchallengeable,

[40] Fr. Chad Ripperger, PhD, *The Binding Force of Tradition* (Lincoln, NE: Sensus Traditionis Press, 2013), 22.

[41] When the Pope uses his office of universal teacher to bind the whole Church, i.e., infallible teaching.

and all the faithful must adhere to it with the full assent of faith. Is it possible for a pope to enact such a decree but with heretical content? The Catholic Church says such a thing is impossible since the providential hand of God would prevent it. Perhaps like the Orthodox Church might say that God protects an ecumenical council from error, so, too, Catholics believe God protects from error the *ex cathedra* decrees of popes, along with several other ecclesial agencies.[42] What God can do with many, he can do with one. The real question between the Catholics and the Orthodox is whether the Scripture, the Fathers, or the councils adequately testify to this peculiar charism for St. Peter's successor. With this summary and clarification of the Catholic position, my hope is that when we consider the objections from the Eastern Orthodox side, they can be heard without being tangled with misunderstandings of what the Catholic Church teaches, lest both sides waste their time in having to either re-clarify or correct themselves. In this way, with both respective views being fairly presented, readers have the benefit of truly comparing their merits.

[42] Such as Ecumenical Councils, bishops when dispersed throughout the world but unanimously agree on an dogma of faith to be definitively held, the unanimous view of the Church Fathers, the consensus of scholastic theologians, and the *sensus fidelium*.

## *Chapter Six*

# Development of Doctrine

IN TODAY'S DIALOGUE between the Orthodox and Catholics on papal primacy, one loses count of how often the phrase "development of doctrine" shows up, particularly from the mouth or pen of the Catholic interlocutor. What is the significance of this, and why is it important to this subject of papal primacy? Moreover, is the development of doctrine a valid Christian belief? These are the questions we are concerned with in this chapter. Perhaps the reader might suppose a topic like this should belong in the chapter on *Epistemological Considerations.* Surely, the theory of doctrinal development plays a role in theological or historical method, but it serves more as an *a posteriori* explanation than it does a function in the actual development of doctrine. Even so, such an immense and controversial topic deserves to be given a chapter of its own.

To break the ice on this, I should ask outright, "Is a Catholic forced to come up with the concept of doctrinal development in order to bridge a discontinuous gap between the content of contemporary Catholic dogma and the beliefs of the early Church of the Fathers?" In my own experience, I have had plenty of Orthodox interlocutors complain about the Catholic's reliance on development almost as a crutch for the glaring handicap of historical continuity. Instead of simply showing the continuity through historical demonstration from the patristics, there is a laborious effort to explain how doctrine advances from its

primitive form to what appears to be large leaps of unpredictable and spontaneous changes.

This pertains especially to the topic of the papal primacy and its historical origins. As a former Protestant, particularly during my Anglican phase, I recall how frustrating it was to see citations from Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers that supposedly prove the veracity of the papacy while it seemed so much foreign material was being read back into the texts. And sometimes I'd hear that, while the citations might be interpreted in more than one way, a theory of development builds a large enough bridge to connect today's teaching with the Fathers. For reasons similar to this, some critics of the Catholic position on papal primacy have called it the "Peter syndrome" when one has the habit of going into the writings of the past and seeing any positive statement regarding St. Peter's leadership in the Apostolic College as proof positive of the First Vatican Council's declaration on papal supremacy. The base charge here is that Catholics are assuming far too much and ignoring an accurate hermeneutic for the sake of upholding the papacy. In any case, it is clear that when the debate between Catholics and Orthodox arrives at the point of analyzing history, there will always be talk of doctrinal development.

For some Orthodox, this reliance on a theory of development *is a testimony in itself* that argues against the antiquity of the papal claims. Some Orthodox even question the legitimacy of doctrinal development altogether. It is not very difficult to see how this is. According to the New Testament, the Apostolic Tradition was "once for all delivered to the saints."[1] Both Orthodox and Catholics agree that the divine Revelation which came through Jesus Christ and his holy Apostles was "deposited" into the Church. The task of the Church is to guard that deposit by disseminating its original content without any addition, subtraction, or any alteration at all. When a postman delivers a letter, it is pertinent to his job to keep the mail completely intact. In fact, keeping the original product as it was shipped until delivery is essential to the job function. In the same way, many Orthodox can find themselves perplexed at the notion that a theory of doctrinal development could be used to demonstrate continuity, for if continuity were demonstrable, why the need of a theory of development? Good question, indeed. St. John H. Newman is famous for defending that Christ and the Apostles were given the "idea" of the fullness of Christian Revelation, but that "ideas have consequences," and

[1] Jude 3.

it takes time for all those consequences to be realized, particularly propelled by intellectual inquiry. So there is no substantial change of the Revelation, but a change nonetheless, a change which only makes the revelatory data more of what it is by a fuller realization of itself through time. Still, the Orthodox have trouble tracing the humble primitive Church to the extravagant Vatican papacy.

For this and other reasons, the Byzantine scholar Fr. Andrew Louth, a well-known priest in the Russian Orthodox Church, has stated plainly that the development of doctrine is itself "not an acceptable category in Orthodox theology."[2] Taking primarily from St. John H. Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Fr. Louth describes what he thinks are the insurmountable obstacles that doctrinal development causes for the Orthodox theologian. Most notably, Newman's claim that doctrine undergoes *progress*, which would entail that the doctrine of Christ goes forward and advances unto a certain form not already had. This is typically what we mean when we are making progress toward some goal. In particular, Fr. Louth sees this idea of progress in Newman as involving "unpredictable jumps"[3] in doctrine. Being unpredictable, these moves in doctrine are not determined by logical deduction or sequence. This kind of development would be simply "drawing logical conclusions from initial premises."[4] But if we go beyond this, how do we escape the act of adding or subtracting by creating ideas not inherent in the original deposit of tradition? Secondly, Fr. Louth claims that doctrinal development would insinuate that the Church, after so many years, can come to know and understand more than the Apostles. He writes: "We do not stand over against the Fathers; we come to them to learn from them."[5] If the Church Fathers are truly our Fathers in the faith, then their children do not qualify to teach them but only to learn from them. The children are on the receiving end, the Fathers are they who give and hand on.

Another critic of doctrinal development was the late Oxford bishop Charles Gore (1853–1932), who was a well-educated Anglican opponent of the papal claims. Concerning our topic, Dr. Gore gives what he thinks

---

[2] Andrew Louth, "Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology?" in *Orthodoxy and Western Culture: A Collection of Essays Honoring Jaroslav Pelikan on His Eightieth Birthday*, eds. Valerie Hotchkiss and Patrick Henry (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2005), 61.

[3] Louth, "Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology," 51.

[4] Louth, "Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology," 51.

[5] Louth, "Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology," 55.

is the central problem for Catholics, and it seems to match the perspective of many Orthodox:

> According to the older and really catholic view, the *later Church can never know what the early Church did not*. . . . The revelation receives no augmentation, and what for our discipline was left obscure at first, *must remain obscure*, according to God's providence, till our fragmentary knowledge becomes complete in the Day of Light.[6]

"What was left obscure must remain obscure" is the heart of the idea. This is an outright denial that the Church can, over time, even being illumined through a steady contemplation of the one and unchanging deposit of faith, achieve greater clarity from the dogmas of faith. If it was ever obscure in the patristic data, it must remain obscure and far afield from dogmatic value. To claim otherwise is to say that we know more than the early Church, inverting the proper order, as Fr. Louth claims.

Based on the above, wouldn't it seem clear enough that development of Christian doctrine is to be rejected by both Catholics and Orthodox? The answer hinges on what we mean by development in Christian doctrine. If we mean that the divine Revelation given in Jesus Christ can be substantially changed, added to, or subtracted from, then everyone should reject it. Yet, it would be terribly difficult to sustain the idea that Jesus Christ gave to the Apostles a pre-packaged set of books which contained already explicated statements which answer every single doctrinal question that would ever come before the desk of the Church. To think as if the Apostles carried with them official doctrinal documents which contain all the knowledge and decrees of the Great Seven Ecumenical Councils is certainly absurd. Surely, neither the Orthodox nor the Catholic would like to erase the Christological developments of the first several centuries of Church history all in the name of, "what was left obscure, must remain obscure."

To get a thoroughly accurate picture of how the Catholic Church has thought about the nature of doctrinal development, I rely heavily on the treatment given by Dr. Lawrence Feingold, who explains the Catholic position on doctrinal development most succinctly, while referring to the most relevant ecclesial documents. If there was ever a question

[6] Dr. Charles Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims* (Waterloo Place, London: Rivingtons, 1889), 42–43.

of whether the idea of doctrinal development was at least semi-official Catholic teaching, the following references should put the question to rest. In his address at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope St. John XXIII made it clear that the doctrine once delivered by Christ and the Apostles is unchangeable. He said:

> This certain and *immutable doctrine*, faithfully assented to, needs to be investigated and proclaimed as our time demands. One thing is the deposit of faith, that is, the truths contained in this venerable doctrine; another thing is the *way in which they are proclaimed*, while *always preserving* the *same sense* and *judgment*.[7]

For Catholics, therefore, the deposit of faith is immutable and must be assented to. But as one can see, there is a distinction to be drawn from doctrine and the manner in which it is made known. There is immutability in doctrine while mutability in expression. This duality of immutability of doctrine and mutability of expression is communicated in the opening of the First Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*:

> For the doctrine of faith as revealed by God has not been presented to men as a philosophical system *to be perfected by human ingenuity*; it was presented as a divine trust given to the bride of Christ to be *faithfully kept* and infallibly interpreted. It also follows that any meaning of the sacred dogmas that has once been declared by holy Mother Church, must *always be retained*; and there must *never be any deviation* from that meaning on the specious grounds of a more profound understanding. "Therefore, let there be growth . . . and all possible progress in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom whether in single individuals or in the whole body, in each man as well as in the entire Church, according to the stage of their development; but only within

[7] John XXIII, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962), 791–92, https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-54-1962-ocr.pdf, as quoted in *Faith Comes from What is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology*, by Lawrence Feingold (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2016), 268n162. Translation is his own.

> proper limits, that is, in the *same doctrine*, in the *same meaning*, and in the *same purport.*"[8]

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) follows exactly this explanation in a document ratified by Pope St. Paul VI in 1973:

> As for the meaning of dogmatic formulas, this remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is *expressed with greater clarity or more developed.* The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; secondly, that these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being *like a goal that is constantly being sought by means of such approximations.* Those who hold such an opinion do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a *determinate way.*[9]

The same document harkens back to the speech given by Pope St. John XXIII above and says: "What is new and what he recommends in view of the needs of the times pertains only to the *modes of studying, expounding* and *presenting* that doctrine while *keeping its permanent meaning.*"[10] And, in description of what is actually changing in doctrinal development, it states: "Moreover, it sometimes happens that some dogmatic truth is first expressed incompletely (but not falsely), and at a later date, when

[8] J. Clarkson et al., eds., *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973), 34 (emphasis added). Also quoted slightly differently in *Faith Comes from What is Heard*, by Feingold, 269. The last sentence is a quotation from St. Vincent of Lérins's *Commonitorium* 23.54, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 11, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. C. A. Heurtley (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3506.htm; of interest here is St. Vincent, who is a canonized saint of both Orthodox and Catholic communions. He utilizes the very word that Fr. Andrew Louth had taken issue with: *progress.*

[9] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium ecclesiae*, Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day (June 24, 1973), §5, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19730705_mysterium-ecclesiae_en.html. Also found in *Faith Comes from What is Heard*, by Feingold, 269–70n162 (emphasis added).

[10] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, §5 (emphasis added).

considered in a broader context of faith or human knowledge, it receives a *fuller and more perfect expression*."[11] It is therefore unmistakable that a Catholic perspective on doctrinal development is ruled by the *immutability of doctrine* all the while having the *mutable capacity to grow in its expression, adding clarity or explication from what is implicated.*

What might the Orthodox say to this? We saw how Fr. Louth rejects development as a legitimate category for Eastern theology. Fr. Pomazansky apparently had a more nuanced approach to the question. For instance, instead of simply rejecting doctrinal development when he poses the question of whether Orthodoxy can accept the idea or not, he states that this dispute is one "over words" since the word *development* is "understood in different ways."[12] On one hand, Fr. Pomazansky can reject development if it entails that we come to know more than the Apostles. He writes: "There is nothing to add to the teaching of faith handed down by the Apostles."[13] On the other hand, he is insistent that the Orthodox do not deny "every kind of development in the sphere of dogma."[14] Essential doctrine remains one and the same, but the precise definitions of the ecumenical councils, says Fr. Pomazansky, gave greater "quantity" to dogmatic content. Consequently, one "cannot deny that thanks to such dogmatic definitions the content of faith has become *more clear in the awareness of the people of the Church and in the Church hierarchy itself*."[15] More importantly, do any Church Fathers speak about the idea of doctrinal development? St. Augustine wrote:

> For while the hot restlessness of heretics stirs questions about many articles of the Catholic faith, the necessity of defending them forces us both *to investigate them more accurately*, to *understand them more clearly*, and to proclaim them more earnestly; and the question mooted by an adversary becomes the *occasion of instruction*.[16]

---

[11] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, §5 (emphasis added).

[12] E.g., Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition*, trans. and ed. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997), 357.

[13] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 357–58.

[14] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 361.

[15] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 361 (emphasis added).

[16] St. Augustine, *City of God* 16.2, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Marcus Dods (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120116.htm.

Once again, St. Augustine argues that by spending more time inspecting the sacred deposit when outward attacks arise against it, a deeper understanding of that deposit is gained. More on this comes from St. Vincent de Lérins, which we already cited. To expand his view, let's look at a fuller citation:

> But some one will say, perhaps, shall there, then, be no progress in Christ's Church? Certainly; all possible progress. For what being is there, so envious of men, so full of hatred to God, who would seek to forbid it? Yet on condition that it be *real progress, not alteration of the faith.* For progress requires that the *subject be enlarged in itself,* alteration, that it be transformed into something else. The *intelligence,* then, the *knowledge,* the *wisdom,* as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of *the whole Church,* ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to *increase* and make much and vigorous *progress;* but yet only in *its own kind;* that is to say, in the *same doctrine,* in the *same sense,* and in the *same meaning.*[17]

As one reads this, he should recall Fr. Louth's criticism of Newman's use of the word "progress" as indicative of "unpredictable jumps" which go beyond logical deduction. And yet, we have here a saint of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, who unashamedly used precisely that word to describe the development of the Christian religion. Of course, for St. Vincent, and for Newman or any right-thinking Catholic, this progress is restrained by the *immutability of meaning.* This is why "real progress" is defined as something being "*enlarged in itself.*" Not that truth itself grows to adapt to that which it is not, but the apprehension by us of the truth grows and manifests itself in ways the original form could not in and of itself. In other words, as the original idea of the Christian faith unfolds through the minds and hearts of the baptized, the growth in development is simply the same idea becoming more of itself; that is, further consequences are apprehended.

As the late Msgr. George Agius said, "*Veritas crescit eundo*—truth grows in time," and later clarified: "It grows, not in itself, but in *our* mind

[17] Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 23.1, *New Advent.*

and heart."[18] One may also say that what was revealed *explicitly* by Christ and the Apostles leaves open for our digging out what is therein *implicit*.

St. Vincent of Lérins goes on to speak of the parallel between religious development and the development of the human body as an organism. He even utilizes the horticultural analogy of a planted seed which is first sown and later harvested. At the end of the day, he recognizes the reality of change and development in doctrine, and yet posits a certain control to all this mutability by an undisputable immutability of the original teaching handed on by Christ and the Apostles.

Perhaps the greatest examples of this are the first several ecumenical councils of Christendom. If Christ is worshiped as God, is he just another mode of the Father? Did our Lord Jesus Christ have a soul? A rational mind? Two distinct wills? Was Jesus Christ consubstantial with the eternal God and Father? Was Christ adopted as a Son in time? Was Christ only like the Father in all things, but not equal in substance? Does Christ have two persons, one for each nature, or does he have one person in two natures? All of these questions, without the aid of reason and philosophical employment, would never have been adequately answered. The natural philosophy of Greek Hellenism was baptized to serve as a vehicle to communicate divine and eternal truths. The original data of Jesus Christ was not, theologically speaking, sufficient to discriminate between the orthodox and the heterodox, since both alike could agree on what was preliminarily dogmatic. Nestorian theologians could all agree on the Council of Nicaea (325) which dogmatized the deity of Christ and his consubstantiality with the Father. Therefore, room was made for doctrinal development to further clarify inconsistencies. So much significance did these new developmental formulae have that it became the dividing line between the heterodox and the orthodox. If the bishops of the Church resigned themselves to saying, "What is obscure for the Fathers must remain obscure for their children," then the Church would have never made any advance, and Nestorians would have been forced to commune with the Catholics, and so and on so forth.

In a similar way, therefore, the position and rights of St. Peter's successor in the world episcopate had its primitive beginnings in the era of the Apostles and immediately afterwards. We see evidence from the first few centuries that the bishop of Rome took initiative to lead the Church into pure doctrine and proper discipline. Even when Rome was not issuing

[18] Msgr. George Agius, DD, JCD, *Tradition and the Church* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 2005), 278 (emphasis added).

decrees or judgments, just the communion of Rome was understood as a fixed point of principled unity for the visible Church. As the Church grew in its need to codify her traditional structure into a body of laws, there were official canons legislated at the Council of Sardica (343) which reflected the ability of Rome's juridical authority to come to the aid of any bishop who pled innocent against conciliar condemnations. As the age of ecumenical councils emerged following the Constantinian revolution (313), it was universally known that St. Peter's successor would have to ratify its decrees before a Council was accepted as ecumenical. As for the particulars that led up to the nineteenth century dogma of papal jurisdiction and infallibility, the basic four points listed in the introduction were the seed for further growth down through the ages.

Of all the factors going into the development of the papacy, the fact that the Fathers of the Church recognized that Rome's leadership position was not arranged *simply* by the custom of the Church but by divine institution, carries the most weight in legitimizing the decrees of Vatican I. The Petrinology[19] of the Fathers, that is, the role of St. Peter in ecclesiology, continued in the ecclesiology of the West with Rome as the Petrine center. By way of repetition, this Petrine-Roman constitution claims that the Lord Jesus Christ had singled out St. Peter to be the head of the Apostles and that his successors would inherit this primacy over the universal Church in the fixed station of the Roman bishopric. This is perhaps the most important element to point out in the study of the development of the papacy. For, if the papacy in the Roman See is divinely instituted by virtue of St. Peter's primacy, then the papacy is not reversible or destructible. All Christians would accept the New Testament writings as a matter of divine institution, and because of this, they would never entertain the idea that they are subject to reversal or annulment. For the Eastern Orthodox, the monarchical episcopate is of divine institution, and as such, it cannot be reversed or withdrawn for an alternative ecclesial polity. In other words, something which is of divine institution (*jure divino*) for the Church is divinely irreversible. The Orthodox Church could not convene a Pan-Orthodox Council in the future that obliterates the office of the diaconate. Why? Because that office has as its author the Lord Jesus Christ directly through his holy Apostles, and cannot be

[19] Apparently, this word "Petrinology" was coined by the late medieval historian Walter Ullmann; see Philippe Blaudeau, "Between Petrine Ideology and Realpolitik: The See of Constantinople in Roman Geo-Ecclesiology (449–536)," in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, eds. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford University Press, 2012), 366n11.

undone by the Church. In the same way, the Petrine-Roman constitution has the same divine character in the Church's government, and so whatever happens the Chair of Peter in Rome remains the center of the Church. For the Orthodox, the Chair of Peter in Rome could be a very helpful and important role in the Church, but at the end of the day it is not immediately and divinely instituted by the Lord and thus can be departed with. For Catholics it cannot be neglected or excluded.

This explains why even granting the purported papal lapses, such as that of Liberius, Vigilius, or Honorius, none of these phenomena ever led the Church to abandon the Petrine-Roman constitution in the hierarchy in any of the years that followed those events. After the lapse of Liberius, the Church still respected Rome as the final court of appeals. After Vigilius and Honorius, the Church still abided by the divine arrangement of Rome as the First See. Something equivalent could be said about the episcopal government of the Church. Sometimes major portions of the Church's bishops had forsaken orthodoxy, but this never led to the Church's abandonment of the episcopal government in principle, even when resorting to an alternative form of government might have been, by all appearances, more beneficial. In much the same way, the papal government, in principle, was not thought to have been thwarted because of some less-than-worthy occupants. What is of divine law, therefore, is not subject to revision or dismissal. Christ wrote the script, come what may.

With this indelible character, the divine irreversibility acclaimed for the Roman primacy would enable the student of history to see a significant force behind the modern cause for its defense. For if sufficient evidence from the historical sources shows that the papacy was held to be divinely instituted, then divine irreversibility seems most reasonably deduced. By the same token, if divine irreversibility of the papal office is sufficiently demonstrated, then this provides a major resolution to the tense debate between Catholics and Orthodox. That is at least a motive of credibility for Catholicism before venturing into the discussion over what kind of primacy was instituted by our Lord, as well as to its nature and extent. Furthermore, if the papal primacy is, according to the Fathers, divinely instituted for the sake of unity, preservation of doctrine, and the exercise of disciplinary authority, then its divine irreversibility would imply, to some extent, some sort of inference that is akin to papal infallibility and indefectibility. Of course, that is a deduction from a rather long string of premises. Nonetheless, its logical merits prove themselves each step of the way.

As we will see below, the Orthodox position is quite unwelcoming to

any idea of a primate who has universal jurisdiction *by divine right*. The furthest modern theologians have gone is to speak of a divine institution of universal primacy on the basis that a universal synod would require a primate to its convocation. This still differs greatly with the Petrinological motif as held in the *Petro-Romanitas*. The matter boils down to precisely what the historical sources, shared by both Catholics and Orthodox, say about a universal primate and its founding principle. This is why ascertaining the patristic evidence on this issue becomes paramount in making a decisive judgment between Orthodox and Catholics.

Returning to that axiom of Bishop Gore, "What was obscure in the Fathers must remain obscure in their children," or rather Fr. Louth's, "We will never know or understand more than the Apostles and Fathers of the Church," let us permit the voice of one prominent Church Father to speak his mind on this matter. St. Gregory of Nyssa said the following in his thirty-first oration on the theological growth of the Holy Spirit's deity:

> Our Saviour had some things which, He said, *could not be borne at that time by His disciples* (though they were filled with many teachings), perhaps for the reasons I have mentioned; and therefore they were hidden. And again He said that all things should be taught us by the Spirit when He should come to dwell amongst us. Of these things one, I take it, was the Deity of the Spirit Himself, *made clear later on when such knowledge should be seasonable and capable of being received after our Saviour's restoration*, when it would no longer be received with incredulity because of its marvelous character.[20]

This is how St. Gregory answers the question: "But, he says, who in ancient or modern times ever worshipped the Spirit? Who ever prayed to Him? Where is it written that we ought to worship Him, or to pray to Him, and whence have you derived this tenet of yours?"[21] Now, this is not for a second to misrepresent St. Gregory as if he believed the doctrine of the Spirit's deity was just revealed in the late fourth century. Anyone who reads the entire Oration will see that he believed it was taught by

[20] St. Gregory Nazianzen, Fifth Theological Oration 31.27, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 7, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310231.htm.

[21] St. Gregory Nazianzen, Fifth Theological Oration, *New Advent*, §12.

the Holy Scriptures. However, St. Gregory leaves time for its rumination in the mind of the Church before it has a more deepened understanding and manifestly clear proclamation, in other words, after reflecting the immutable versus mutable aspects of the Christian revelation just covered above.

The idea here is not that the Church learns brand new things which the Apostles would have cocked their head sideways to. Rather, the same divine Helper, the Holy Spirit, which animated the Apostles and led them "into all truth,"[22] continues to live in the Church and lead the Church into the same. To say that we are limited to simply repeating what the Scripture says without allowing it to cause more growth in the apprehension of divine content, is to deny that the Holy Spirit can empower clarifying resolutions when doctrinal debates arise. On top of that, we must admit that not every possible theological question related to faith and morals was confronted by the Apostles or the early Fathers. On this point, the Apostles are not surpassed in knowledge, as if a greater knowledge borne by us stands between us and them. Rather, it is simply time which stands between us and them. It was the successors to the Apostles who were faced with fresh, new, and unforeseen questions that were never before posed.

Theoretically speaking, if the Apostles during their missionary days in Jerusalem were put into a time machine forward to the Council of Nicaea (787), which dogmatized the legitimacy of icon-veneration, they would probably have to ponder the arguments as if they were new questions to them. I do not for a second think that they would have come to a different conclusion, but they may not have had all the intellectual minutia right off the bat. This observation, picked up in our times by Dr. Peter Bouteneff, Orthodox Professor of Systematic Theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, confirms what I have said:

> No new teachings, but *new expressions*. Let's look at how this distinction functions throughout history. Over the centuries since the writing of the Scriptures, new questions naturally arose over time, *questions that hadn't occurred to previous generations*. To give an early example, people in the first century were not vexed by the question of whether Christ had a human soul. But at the end of the fourth century, Christ's human soul became a matter of urgent controversy,

[22] John 16:13.

> threatening to divide the Church. So St. Gregory the Theologian and others had to express the teaching that Christ was fully and completely human. . . . He was careful to prove that his teaching was not in disagreement with anything that authoritative texts had proclaimed before his day. *Although Gregory did seem to say something new*, he was only giving *expression* to something that had been believed everywhere, always, and by all who were of the Church.[23]

Questions and disputes which were never in front of the Apostles or the primitive Fathers persist after their time and continue onward unto our times. Sometimes, a certain need is felt which was not felt before. It was not until the fifth century that Western churchmen felt the dire need to emphasize that God's supernatural grace is not just requisite for every salutary act but even for the inception of faith, as well as its final test of perseverance unto the end. This would not be to deny that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficient information to lead one in this correct inference, but it is rather to affirm that the data isn't so programmatically constructed as to forbid fresh, creative, and developed insight. In precisely the same way, the Church always had enough to know that the church of Rome, the home to St. Peter's primacy, was essentially involved in the Church's government, but it took time and experience to gradually understands the rights and prerogatives intrinsically associated with that lofty position. As the Church confronted the Gnostics, there was a need to appeal to the consensus of the apostolic churches against novelties. Within that, there was the special function of the Apostolic See, under which all churches served as their head. Much later, there were conflicts that arose when councils and bishops disputed against the popes! How and when can this be allowed without sacrificing the divine institution of St. Peter's primacy? These are questions that were laid on the desk of the Church, and this one in particular hasn't been fully fleshed out.

Another question was which power is higher in the state of Christendom, the pope or the emperor? It was St. Gelasius (492–496) who would be the first to take ancient principles and develop his theory of the *Two Powers*. There is the Church's episcopate under its head, St. Peter, and then there is the imperial power, but the latter is subservient, in matters pertaining to salvation and morality, to the former. Ancient principles

[23] Peter Bouteneff, *Sweeter Than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 135.

were recalled, and yet new formulae were created. The Church experienced these moments in order to better express the Church's faith, not by speculating new and novel ideas to depart from the Church's Tradition but by reexamining the Church's original sources and discerning how what is implied might apply to the current situation. As a safeguard, the Church exercises her extraordinary authority in making decrees and definitions to be adhered to with the full assent of faith. The theory of doctrinal development, for the Catholic, is not a *carte blanche* on which the magisterium is free to endorse whatever she wants. On this, Pope Pius XI (1857–1939) wrote:

> For the teaching authority of the Church, which in the divine wisdom was constituted on earth in order that revealed doctrines might remain intact for ever, and that they might be brought with ease and security to the knowledge of men, and which is daily exercised through the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops who are in communion with him, has also the office of defining, when it sees fit, any truth with solemn rites and decrees, whenever this is necessary either to oppose the errors or the attacks of heretics, or more clearly and in greater detail to stamp the minds of the faithful with the articles of sacred doctrine which have been explained. But in the use of this extraordinary teaching authority *no newly invented matter is brought in, nor is anything new added to the number of those truths which are at least implicitly contained in the deposit of Revelation*, divinely handed down to the Church: only those which are made clear which perhaps may *still seem obscure to some, or that which some have previously called into question is declared to be of faith.*[24]

That last sentence is of vital importance. Pius XI mentions that there may have been persons in the Church who doubted beliefs which later are taught to be *de fide* ("of faith"). He means to say that, at times, a dogmatic formula can be produced on a matter which, prior to it becoming dogma, was debated and doubted by scholars and theologians. There is a lesson to be learned by recognizing the fallibility of the Church Fathers

[24] Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*: On Religious Unity (January 6, 1928), §9, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html.

as individuals and even of certain eras of the Church filled with many bishops and Fathers. Today, we can almost take for granted that certain things which are now universal norms had always been universal norms. In a certain era of the Church, it was tolerated for Christian parents to purposefully not baptize their children in order to allow them to grow up and make a conscious decision.[25] How many saints and bishops protested the idea that the baptism of heretics was completely invalid? How many erroneously believed that thrice immersion was *absolutely essential* to baptism (some still do)?[26] There were others, like St. Gregory of Nyssa, who foresaw the whole of the damned eventually saved. Many Orthodox, including Photius of Constantinople, were prepared to say that certain saints who taught the *Filioque* were simply in error! Such a concept was unthinkable to many Byzantine Fathers. St. Jerome, at one point, even affirmed the essential identity between the office of presbyter and bishop.

Needless to say, there was ample space for men to doubt the primacy of St. Peter and its supreme height in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. There was a time when North African synods blocked appeals to the papal court, protesting universal jurisdiction, as late as the fifth century. And even when the papacy was confessed, certain aspects, such as its nature, limits, and boundaries, were continually debated all the way into the nineteenth century. In fact, theologians and canonists still have questions before them about the limits of papal authority. For these reasons, it is not a shock to find even saints of the Church positing views which go directly contrary to what later became the Church's dogmatic position. To this precise point, St. Augustine writes:

> We must distinguish between the *error which we may tolerate* on questions not diligently examined and *not yet defined by the full authority of the Church*, and the error trying to upset the very foundations of the Church, which we cannot tolerate.[27]

---

[25] St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Basil the Great were fourth and fifth century saints whose parents permitted them to be baptized as adults.

[26] In Catholicism, running water on the skin—either sprinkled, poured, or immersed—and that at least once is all that is required. For the Orthodox, who hold to the absolute essentiality of thrice immersion, the question could be posed, "How many held single immersion as sufficient?"

[27] Augustine, Sermon 294, §4, translated in *Tradition and Church*, by Agius, 286 (emphasis added).

It is not often that you get a saint and doctor of the Church saying that we must "tolerate" errors, but the point is clearly made here by the eminent Augustine. Contrary to the viewpoint of some, there were errors that were held by prominent Fathers. This was wonderfully described by the late James Cardinal Gibbons (1834–1921) of Baltimore:

> Now, a doctrine which is implicitly, less clearly, not so earnestly proposed, may be overlooked, misunderstood, called in question; consequently, it may happen that some articles are now universally believed in the Church, in regard to which doubts and controversies existed in former ages, even within the bosom of the Church.[28]

A perfect example of this might be the manner in which some Easterners thought of Rome's authoritative decrees, such as the Tome of St. Leo the Great. While many bishops surely thought it was the last word on the matter, others thought it should be examined and possibly rejected. To make this point even clearer, Msgr. Agius writes:

> It is evident, then, not only that there may be truths contained in the Deposit of Faith which *may not always have been explicitly believed*, but that there are in reality truths which were once implicitly contained in the Deposit of Faith which must now be explicitly believed by all, *under pain of eternal damnation.*[29]

We might extend this further and say that there are truths which are substantial with the Deposit of Faith and which were openly contested by the men (even saints) of the Church, but which later becomes a dogmatic requirement (*de fide*) for salvation. That might sound a bit strange, especially for an Orthodox reader. But it is not something entirely new. St. Vincent de Lérins, himself a stern critic of the practice of rebaptism, at once cherishes the memory of St. Cyprian, regardless of the latter's errors; and then at the same time sentences all who follow St. Cyprian's beliefs on rebaptism to "eternal fire with the devil."[30] This is how Catholics can still venerate the memory of saints who erred in their lifetime, while

[28] James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers* (Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1980), 11 (emphasis added).

[29] E.g., Agius, *Tradition and the Church*, 287.

[30] Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 6.18, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

placing even the anathema on their views today. This is, of course, not to disregard the scandal of doctrinal division and contradiction among the Church Fathers. As much as is possible, following St. John Damascene, we should strive as best we can to connect them in harmony.

Applying all of this to the subject of papal primacy, we can conclude that throughout the first millennium, the essential logic of the papacy was certainly active and pronounced, but more pressing issues stood in the way and deserved more attention.[31] That is not to say the matter was ignored. It would be left for second millennium experiences for a surgical study on the precise rights of the Apostolic See to emerge and thereafter publications of fully authoritative decrees on the matter.

Pope Benedict XVI, when he was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, spoke of the patristic recognition of the "special function" of Rome's primacy as a "point of reference."[32] This special function continued onward from the very beginning, says Cardinal Ratzinger, and through "practical application" and "gradual articulation" arrived at a dogmatic formula in 1870 at the First Vatican Council.[33] "In that sense," he writes, "the dogma in its new and more pointed form contributes more precision, *but nothing substantially new*; rather it gathers together and gives concrete form to what had been shaped, what had been happening, *throughout history*."[34]

But a Roman Catholic cardinal such as Ratzinger, later to become pope, might have a slight bias toward a high-papacy in his assessment of the Church's history on the subject of primacy, and it is likely that Ratzinger's gloss on the seeds of the papacy in history might not come across as convincing to the Orthodox. Ratzinger seems to be satisfied with the witness of St. Ignatius of Antioch and Rome's first place in honor (presiding in love), *as if this bore enough data to unfold the development*

[31] Questions of whether jurisdiction is immediate, direct, ordinary, or that the pope's definitive teaching does not require the consent of the Church for its content to be deemed irreformable, might all be under this category of progressive teaching.

[32] Joseph Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 379.

[33] Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 380.

[34] Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 380 (emphasis added). For a detailed article demonstrating that Fr. Ratzinger held the Catholic Church's doctrine to be in organic continuity with the apostolic deposit as disseminated in the first millennium, over and against the Orthodox Church, see Erick Ybarra, "Faithful to the First Millennium: Fr. Joseph Ratzinger's Commentary on Eastern Orthodoxy," *Academia.edu*, June 6, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/49146621/Faithful_to_the_First_Millennium_Fr_Joseph_Ratzingers_Commentary_on_Eastern_Orthodoxy.

*of the First Vatican Council on primacy.* Often enough, the non-Catholic inquirer can grow suspicious of this seed-to-tree claim from doctrinal development. Is there enough evidence from early centuries to make a convincing case that the seed of the medieval papacy is really something taught by the Church Fathers? Surprisingly, it is non-Catholic scholarship which finds an explicit development of the papacy as early as the fifth century during the pontificate of St. Leo the Great (400–461) that makes it substantially equal with the medieval papacy. This saintly pope marks a clear definition of the early theory of the papal primacy. Discovery of this is confirmed by a set of exchanges that were conducted in the late twentieth century between Catholic and Lutheran theologians in ecumenical dialogue. In particular, one paper produced by graduate professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn (1907–1973), gives us the perspective of a Lutheran on the early Roman primacy. Two points from his conclusion are worth mentioning. First, regarding the claims that came forth from the See of Rome, he writes:

> The bishops of Rome *by the time of Leo* have developed a self-image which represents them as the heirs and successors and, in a sense, the continuing embodiments of Peter. They feel endowed over against the universal church with all of the authority that their exegesis of the Petrine passages of the New Testament gave to the prince of the apostles.[35]

And secondly, regarding the Eastern perception of the Roman primacy:

> This view [just cited] is *tolerated in the Christian East* when it is in the interest of the East to do so; otherwise it tends to be rejected in practice. (There are at the same time some strands of Eastern thinking that recognize a Roman primacy of considerable dimensions.)[36]

Dr. Piepkorn comes close to admitting that Pope St. Leo the Great already grounds the origin of Roman primacy precisely where *Pastor*

---

[35] Dr. Arthur C. Piepkorn, "The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era: II. From Nicaea to Leo the Great," in *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, eds. Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 97.

[36] Piepkorn, "The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era," in *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, eds. Empie and Murphy, 97 (emphasis added).

*Aeternus* does from the First Vatican Council. While the East can be found resisting the claims to universal jurisdiction, they can also be found tolerating them if it is to their benefit, and even to "considerable dimensions." Piepkorn is not alone in recognizing a fully developed papal supremacy in St. Leo. The Anglican scholar Henry Edwards Symonds said the following regarding St. Leo's position: "As far as theory goes, *there had been little or no development since his day in Papal Claims*—at least in the spiritual sphere."[37] That means that unto Symonds's day, the twentieth century, there had been little or no development since St. Leo in the fifth century. That is, quite simply, a remarkable claim. What scholarship seems to agree upon is that the development of the papal doctrine finds its theoretical apex in St. Leo.

Another fine example of this recognition is from the late Anglican scholar of early Church history, Dr. Cyril Richardson (1909–1976), who writes concerning the early papal claims:

> While they date back a century earlier, they reach their clearest expression in Leo I. The Pope is regarded as the successor of Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, to whom was committed the final authority of the whole Church. The Bishop of Rome is the door-keeper of heaven, the shepherd of the Universal Church and the guardian of the apostolic tradition. On him devolves, from Peter, *the fullness of all power* (*plenitudo potestatis*), and he is without equal or superior in the world. . . . To separate oneself from the Roman Church is to cut oneself off from the divine blessings which are mediated only through the papacy. Again and again through the Middle Ages these claims were asserted and exercised. . . . *The final definition of papal infallibility in 1870 was but a logical consequence of a doctrine which had been at the root of the papal power from these early days.*[38]

Thus far, speaking indirectly to the subject of doctrinal development, we have admissions by Protestant historians that the papal theory was almost entirely developed by the fifth century at the latest in St. Leo, more

[37] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 264 (emphasis added).

[38] Cyril C. Richardson, *The Church Through the Centuries* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Ltd., 1938), 85 (emphasis added).

than five hundred years before the Greek and Latin schism. At the same time, scholars seem to have a different take on how the papacy developed in the East in the early centuries, though there are keen observations as to how the East knew about the papal claims, tolerated them, and even made use of them if they weren't rejected. Adding to this, there was never a formal condemnation of the developing papacy as understood more crisply in the West, and this fact will influence later conclusions in the final analysis of the book.

## *Chapter Seven*

# The Papacy in Holy Scripture

THROUGHOUT PAPAL HISTORY, there are three famous texts which are used to show that St. Peter and his successors have been divinely set apart for a special and unique role in the Church's visible government. The most famous but certainly not the one mostly used is from the Gospel according to St. Matthew where, after St. Simon confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord announces Simon's new name Peter, or "rock," and that he would be the founding stone upon which Jesus would erect his Church. In addition, Jesus tells him that he will give to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven with which Peter will be able to bind in heaven what he binds on earth. In Catholic versus Protestant polemics, there has been debate over whether St. Simon is the rock upon which the Church is built or whether it is the confession of his faith that is the rock. Commentators of the past have also floated the idea that the rock is Christ himself or the content of Christ being the Messiah.

In point of fact, the consensus of recent scholarship, taking from the fact that Jesus would have stated his words in Aramaic, has recognized that it is St. Simon, the man, who is "the rock."[1] Also, when St. Paul wants to refer to St. Peter, he uses the Greek for Πέτρος (Gal 2:8), but he also switches to using the Greek for Κηφᾶς (Gal 2:9; 1 Cor 1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5),

[1] E.g., A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 59. Dr. Siecienski notes modern scholarship has become a growing consensus on the "Rock" being St. Peter.

which harkens back to the Aramaic form of "Peter." Why would St. Paul, writing freely in the form of Koine Greek, revert to a Greek form of the Aramaic form of St. Peter's name? It shows that even when the Apostles were speaking in Greek, they would still use the Aramaic form of the Greek to refer to St. Peter rather than the standard Koine Greek Πέτρος. How can this be explained? The best explanation is that Jesus originally gave St. Simon the name Kephā in Aramaic, since that is the language the Lord Jesus spoke with his disciples, and that when the Apostles continued their ministry in the Greek tongue, they simply kept the Aramaic pronunciation in Greek form. That is a strong indication that Aramaic was the language used, and thus St. Peter has to be identified as "the rock," since the Greek of *Petra* has a feminine distinction versus the Greek of *Petros*; a distinction in the Koine Greek of St. Matthew's text would not apply as the Aramaic *Kepha* has no feminine versus masculine distinction.

As far back as the very beginning of the twentieth century, even Protestant scholarship was coming to an agreement that "the rock" is St. Peter. The late Dr. G. B. Stevens (1854–1906), professor of both New Testament Criticism and Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School, stated:

> In the Aramaic, which Jesus doubtless spoke, both Πέτρος and πέτρᾳ would be represented by the same word. . . . It is quite certain, and is now generally admitted, that the words 'this rock' refer, not to Christ, nor to Peter's confession of faith, but to Peter himself.[2]

According to Dr. Siecienski, even Orthodox theologians such as Veselin Kesich and Theodore Stylianopoulos, have come to agree.[3] Moreover, in the Koine Greek of the Gospel according to St. John, the evangelist records the following statement made by the Lord Jesus speaking to St. Simon: "So you are Simon the Son of John? You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)."[4] Christ already foretold to St. Peter that his name would be changed far before any confession of faith came from his mouth. Again, this is conclusive evidence that the Lord used Aramaic to refer to St. Peter as "the rock." This is significant since, in former times, scholars have attempted to point to the difference between πέτρᾳ and

[2] George Barker Stevens, PhD, DD, *The Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 139.

[3] Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 139.

[4] John 1:42.

πέτρος as a way to differentiate between St. Peter the man and the actual rock foundation upon which Christ is building his Church.

We may also look at this from a logical point of view. If it were the case that Christ did not want to identify St. Simon as "the rock," why would he bother giving him the new title, "Rock?" It would seem not only redundant, but counterproductive to rename St. Simon to the very symbol that Jesus wanted to alienate from the person of St. Simon. Scripture indicates that when someone is given a new name, such as Abram to Abraham in Genesis 17:5, it is because the person is taking on a special mission or identity. It is beyond question that St. Simon is being called to function as the rock of the Church of Jesus Christ. As such, he stands as a bottom-support which provides strength to the Church in the face of opposing forces, much like a rock functioned in keeping a house standing in the face of a storm.[5] Perhaps it is the late Anglican scholar, Dr. Trevor Jalland, who summarized this the best:

> Πέτρᾳ (Kepha) literally denotes the Apostle himself as "Rock," and it is on Peter as on rock that the foundations of the new ἐκκλησία, described in the metaphor of a building, are to be laid. Against that building so erected, in virtue of the immovable nature of the substance on which its foundations rest, neither the forces of evil nor of death can ultimately prevail.[6]

It is precisely this close relationship of dependency between a building and its foundation rock, the former of which depends on the latter for its strength, which has caused theological development on St. Peter's role in the universal Church. If the Church depends on the strength of St. Peter for her foundational support, and if the Church is indestructible on the basis of the latter, then, in some sense, there must be something about St. Peter that is indestructible. Everyone knows it cannot be the moral perfection of the Apostle since, among other things, he has the reputation of having blasphemously denied the Lord before men. We know it can't be absolute doctrinal perfection since just after St. Peter was told he would be given the keys of the kingdom, the Lord told him "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the

[5] Matt 7:24–26.

[6] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 55.

side of God, but of men."[7] This was for attempting to tell the Lord that he should never have to face the horror of betrayal and the ignominious death of Roman crucifixion.

So, right within the same space of Holy Scripture, St. Peter is given this lofty position of being the Rock of the Church and the key-bearer to the Church's gates, while also being called the mouthpiece for Satan himself. If there was ever a Scriptural proof for papal or Petrine *fallibility*, it would be precisely in the context of the *Tu es Petrus*[8] reference. And yet, in another Gospel, that which was written by St. Luke, we read that St. Peter, even after the shame of publicly denying the Lord, is called, as a result of the Lord's prayer on behalf of St. Peter's faith, to conversion in order to strengthen the brethren.[9] However, many scholars have pointed out that the patristic interpretation of the *Tu es Petrus* is eclectic rather than uniform. I do not happen to think this reality does any injury to the Catholic exegesis of the Matthean text. Lest we allow this diversity to paralyze any coherent patristic agreement, I will cite from some of the greatest lights of the East and the West.

St. Cyril of Alexandria (376–444), commenting on the *Tu es Petrus*, writes: "by the words 'on this rock I shall build my church,' Christ makes Peter its Pastor, literally he places Peter over it as shepherd."[10] St. Gregory of Nyssa (335–395), making a reference to the *Tu es Petrus*, writes: "According to the privilege granted him by the Lord, Peter is that unbreakable and *most solid rock upon which the Savior built His church*."[11] St. Cyprian of Carthage (200–258), speaking to the unity of the Church, writes: "*Since both baptism is one and the Holy Spirit is one, and the Church founded by Christ the Lord upon Peter, by a source and principle of unity*."[12] St. Gregory the Great (590–604) writes: "By the voice of the Lord, the care of the whole Church was committed to Peter, the head of all the Apostles; for to him it was said, 'Peter lovest thou Me? Feed

---

[7] Matt 16:23.

[8] Latin for "You are Peter." Henceforth, I will use this shorthand way of referring to the Matthew 16 passage.

[9] Luke 22:32.

[10] Ταύτης ποιμένα τόν Πέτρον ἐφίστησω, *PG* 72.423, quoted in *An Appreciation of Eastern Christianity*, trans. Fr. Clement Englert, C.SS.R. (Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1972), 94.

[11] ἡ ἀρραγής καί ὀχυρωτάτη πέτρα ἐφ ἡν τήν Ἐκκλησίαν ὁ Σωτήρ ὠκοδόμησε, *PG* 46.733, quoted in *An Appreciation of Eastern Christianity*, trans. Fr. Clement Englert.

[12] Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 69, §3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050669.htm.

My Sheep.'"[13] St. John Chrysostom, in his commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, writes that Christ is building the Church on St. Peter, but clarifies, "That is on the faith of his confession."[14] However, if one keeps reading, St. Chrysostom relates it directly to St. Peter the man when he writes:

> Thus he shows many will believe and raises his mind and *makes him shepherd*. . . . For those things which are peculiar to God alone, namely to forgive sins, and to make the Church immovable in such an onset of waves, and to declare a fisherman to be *stronger than any rock while all the world wars against him*, these things he himself promises *to give*; as the Father said, speaking to Jeremiah, that he would set *him as a column of brass and as a wall*—but him [Jeremiah] for one nation [Israel], *this man* [Peter] *for all the world*. . . . The Father gave to Peter the revelation of the Son, but the Son gave to Peter to sow that of the Father and of himself throughout the world; *and to a mortal man he entrusted such authority over all things in heaven, giving him the keys, who extended the Church throughout the world and declares it to be stronger than heaven.*[15]

St. Hilary of Poitiers (310–367) comments on the *Tu es Petrus*:

> Clearly Peter's confession received an appropriate reward because he had seen the Son of God in the man. He is blessed and exalted for having directed his view beyond human eyes, regarding not only that which was from flesh and blood, but perceiving the Son of God through the revelation of the heavenly Father. And he was judged worthy to be the first one to recognize that what was in Christ was of God. O happy is the *foundation of the Church on account of the announcement of his new name.* Worthy is

---

[13] Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren, and David Hess, eds., *Jesus, Peter, & the Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1996), 303.

[14] St. John Chrysostom, Homily 54, §3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 10, eds. Philip Schaff, trans. George Prevost and rev. by M. B. Riddle (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200154.htm.

[15] Chrysostom, Homily 54, *New Advent*, §3.

> the rock upon which the Church is built, against which the laws of hell and the gates of Tartarus and all the prisons of death are broken. O blessed *porter of heaven*, by whose decree the keys of eternity's entrance are handed over, and whose *earthly judgment with heavenly authority has already been decreed. Whatever has been bound or loosed on earth acquires the status of the very same decree in heaven.*[16]

There might not be a clearer exposition of the Matthean text which exemplifies the Catholic interpretation than St. Hilary. Even if his commentary is on the more allegorical side of literary genres, what could St. Hilary possibly mean here underneath the allegory other than that St. Peter is whatever Christ intended by "rock," that the "keys" are a symbol of St. Peter's invested authority to rule the Church on earth, and whose judgments are ratified in heaven? In other words, allegorical interpretations correspond to some reality. St. Hilary is echoed in the words of Pope emeritus Benedict XVI in his exposition of the Matthean text:

> In themselves, the three metaphors that Jesus uses are crystal clear: Peter will be the rocky foundation on which he will build the edifice of the Church; he will have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to open or close it to people as he sees fit; lastly, he will be able to bind or to loose, in the sense of establishing or prohibiting whatever he deems necessary for the life of the Church. It is always Christ's Church, not Peter's. Thus, vivid images portray what the subsequent reflection will describe by the term: "primacy of jurisdiction."[17]

Another prominent Eastern Father is Photius the Great (ninth century), patriarch of Constantinople, who wrote: "On Peter repose the *foundations of the faith*."[18] In a Good Friday homily, Photius commented on St. Peter's thrice denial of the Lord: "He was not deprived of

[16] St. Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. D. H. Williams (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 182. Alternative translation from St. Hilary, *In Mattheum*, 16:7 (*PL* 9.1010), in *Keys of the Kingdom: A Tool's Witness to Truth*, by Stanley Jaki (Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1986), 74–75.

[17] Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience (Wednesday, June 7), 2006, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060607.html.

[18] Photius, Epistle 99 and Niceph., *PG* 102.909A, translated by Fr. John Meyendorff in "St. Peter in Byzantine Theology," in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*,

being the chief of the apostolic choir, and has been established as the foundation-rock of the Church, and is proclaimed by Truth to be the key bearer of the kingdom of heaven."[19] Even Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) could say that Christ built his Church upon St. Peter as the Rock.[20] Edward Siecienski comments on Palamas' twenty-eighth homily: "As late as the fourteenth century, Gregory Palamas referred to Peter as 'shepherd and chief pastor of his whole church' and 'the foundation stone' and 'the first leader of God's faithful people.'"[21] Fr. Meyendorff was correct in noting that the opposition between St. Peter and his confession did not exist among later Byzantine theologians.[22] Above we have some of the greatest patristic lights heralding from Egypt, Cappadocia, North Africa, France, Antioch, Constantinople, as well as two of the three pillars of Holy Orthodoxy, all of whom have no exegetical opposition to "the rock" being St. Peter the man, in addition to his confession of faith.

Now, it might be admitted that one could find some of the authors saying the rock is Christ himself, or it is his confession alone, or something which seems to indicate it is not the person of St. Peter. Let me be clear: this still does not pose a challenge since the Catholic reading of *Tu es Petrus* welcomes the application of "the rock" to Christ, to St. Peter's confession of faith, to St. Peter, to the whole episcopal college, and even to the universal Church. A perfect example of this comes from the commentary of Pope St. Leo the Great, who in one passage can describe how the rock is truly Christ but then refers to St. Peter in a derivative but no less a real sense: "For the stability which the rock himself was given *by that Rock, Christ*, he conveyed also to his successors."[23] Here, the original strength comes from the real Rock, who is Jesus Christ, but is then partaken of by St. Peter, the rock, and then passed on to his successors in the See of Rome. So, we have here a clear multi-valent interpretation of the rock in the Matthean text. In fact, St. Leo can even say that "the rock" is St. Peter's faith:

---

ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 72 (emphasis added).

[19] Photius, Homily 1, in *Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, trans. Cyril Mango (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 50.

[20] Meyendorff, ed., *The Primacy of Peter*, 73–74.

[21] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 101n15; citation from Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, 28; Eng. trans. Christopher Veniamin, *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by St. Gregory Palamas* (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2008), 220–26.

[22] Meyendorff, ed., *The Primacy of Peter*, 72.

[23] Pope Leo, Sermon 5, *PL* 54.153, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 281–82.

> "And upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." On this strength, he says, I will build an eternal temple, and the loftiness of my Church, reaching to heaven, shall rise upon the *firmness of this faith.*[24]

Now, is St. Leo contradicting himself if in one place he interprets the rock as St. Peter the man, in another place St. Peter's faith, and in another place Christ the Lord? On the contrary, it is all complementary, as we can all admit that Christ is the real Rock, since all strength comes from him; we can all admit that St. Peter's weak human nature is not the rock upon which the Church is built but must refer to the power of his confession of faith, which strengthens the man; and we can all agree that the rock is not somehow divorced from the person of St. Peter, who was singled out by Christ and who possesses the firm faith to begin with. With this minor qualification, all the patristic references to "the rock" as faith or Christ can still be reconciled with the Catholic interpretation and application of the Matthean text. The Greek Orthodox Archimandrite Fr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis offers a word of recommendation for contemporary Orthodox who are so eager separate St. Peter and the Πέτρος:

> It is important at this point to resist the temptation of differentiating between Peter's faith and Peter himself, as some Orthodox theologians have attempted to do, in order to avoid understanding the words of Christ in Matt 16:18 ("Thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church") as referring to Peter's person and, by implication to his successors. . . . Yet, is it possible to separate the confession from the Confessor?[25]

In the course of time, the same amount of debate has been caused by St. Matthew's record of the Lord's statement about giving the "keys" of the kingdom to St. Peter and their power to bind and loose in heaven whatever is bound and loosed on earth. What are these keys? What does it mean to bind and loose? More importantly for this debate's sake, does St. Peter alone have the keys and its powers?

We can begin by looking at these "keys." Quite obviously, the bare

[24] Pope Leo, Sermon 4, *PL* 54.149, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 280–81.

[25] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 24.

minimum intent would be to describe tools which open and shut doors. One who has the keys for doors has a singular privilege of determining who has access through them versus who does not. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger comments on the historical and scriptural meaning behind the term:

> As the faithful steward of Jesus' message, Peter opens the door to the Kingdom of Heaven; his is the function of doorkeeper, who has to judge concerning admission and rejection (cf. Rev 3:7). In this sense the significance of the reference to the keys clearly approximates the meaning of binding and loosing. This later expression is taken from rabbinic language,[26] where it stands primarily for the authority *to make doctrinal decisions and, on the other hand, denotes a further disciplinary power, that is, the right to impose or to lift the ban.* The parallelism "on earth and in heaven" implies that Peter's decisions for the Church also have validity before God—an idea that also occurs in an analogous sense in Talmudic literature.[27]

The award-winning Protestant New Testament scholar, Dr. Craig Keener, states the following on this symbolism:

---

[26] Pharisees had the authority to impose a "ban" or exclusion from fellowship to members of the community of Israel who were not living in conformity with the Torah. A similar practice is seen in the literature describing the Qumran communities; see "Discipline," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 304–05.

[27] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Primacy of Peter and Unity of the Church," in *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 63–64 (emphasis added). Corroborating this is the late Anglican New Testament scholar R. T. France who states the following: "These terms [binding and loosing] thus refer to a teaching function, and more specifically one of making halakhic [legal or relating to custom and tradition] pronouncements which are to be binding on the people of God. In that case Peter's 'power of the keys' declared in [Matthew] 16:19 is not so much that of the doorkeeper, who decides who may or may not be admitted to the kingdom of heaven, but that of the steward (as in Isa 22:22, regarded Scripture scholars as the Old Testament background to the metaphor of the keys here), whose keys of office enable him to regulate the affairs of the household" (France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989], 247, cited in *Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church*, by Stephen K. Ray (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999), 269n10.

> Because keys were bulky and might be carried by only a single person, they also symbolized authority; a high official held the keys in a royal kingdom (Isa 22:20–22) and in God's house, the temple. Keys here may signify the authority to admit into the kingdom (Matt 23:13), based on the knowledge of the truth of Jesus (16:16). The Qumran community also had officials deciding whether to admit members; the decision was based on the prospective member's acceptance of the community's rule of life.[28]

Another Protestant scholar, Dr. Kevin Giles, comments on the Lord's giving of the keys to St. Peter:

> The gift to Peter of the keys, almost certainly a symbolic way of speaking of his responsibility *to decide on matters of faith and discipline*, also suggests that Matthew understood that Peter was the leader of the first Christians.[29]

The late world-renowned Protestant scholar and professor of Semitic Languages, Dr. William F. Albright (1891–1971), comments:

> The keys are the symbol of authority . . . the same authority as that vested in the vizier, the master of the house, the chamberlain, of the royal household in ancient Israel. . . . [Furthermore, since] commitment in faith to the Messianic proclamation of Jesus carried with it the obligation to submit to that Community's rules of initiation and to continue in the fellowship of that community of the Man's Kingdom, the Kingdom of heaven.[30]

This is corroborated by the fact that when the Lord commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, he commanded them to teach every creature "all that I have commanded you." Entrance into the

---

[28] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, second ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 87 (emphasis added).

[29] K. N. Giles, "Church Order, Government," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, eds. Martin and Davids, 233 (emphasis added).

[30] W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, eds. and trans., *Matthew: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 196–97. The word "Man" is in reference to Christ, the Son of Man.

Church must have included a pledge to keep those commandments, and the keys would be the symbol which authoritatively enables the rulers of the Church to discipline members who fail to live up to those standards.[31] In a very real sense, having the authority of the keys of the kingdom is the supreme authority in the Church since it defines the standards of membership or dis-membership (i.e., excommunication). On the role of St. Peter, Albright continues: "The role of Peter as steward of the Kingdom is further explained as being the exercise of administrative authority."[32] In summary:

> (Peter) is the rock on which the new community will be built, and in that community Peter's authority to "bind" or "release" will be a carrying out of decisions made in heaven. His teaching and disciplinary activities will be similarly guided by the Spirit to carry out Heaven's will.[33]

The passage also gives the idea that St. Peter has "legislative power" or the "final arbiter" against whose judgments "lie no appeal."[34] Perhaps more important is that the Lord Jesus establishes St. Peter as not only the rock upon which the Church shall be built but also as the rock upon which that Church will withstand external forces acting against it. The Scripture text says that the Church will never be overcome by the "gates of hell" or "gates of Hades" because of the support that its rock provides.

Now what is meant by the "gates of hell?" The late Protestant New Testament scholar R. T. France comments: "The 'gates' thus represent the imprisoning power of death: death will not be able to imprison and hold the church of the living God."[35] Somehow, St. Peter as the rock and St. Peter as the holder of the keys through which he governs the household of Christ is the cause of strength to the Church such that it cannot be overcome by the power of death. That is certainly pregnant with more implications in light of Church history. Just what church was supported by this notion of a Petrine architecture to its structural design?

---

[31] Matt 18:15–18.

[32] Albright and Mann, *Matthew: A New Translation*, 196–97.

[33] Albright and Mann, *Matthew: A New Translation*, 198.

[34] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 56.

[35] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 624. For more references from Protestant New Testament scholars, see "Protestant Scholars Admit Peter is the Rock," *Catholic Answers*, Jan. 1, 1998, https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/peter-is-the-rock.

In opposition to seeing this as an exclusive power given to St. Peter, many Orthodox have pointed to the text of Matthew 18:18, which describes the same power to bind and loose as held by *all the Apostles and all pastors of the local church.* This is most certainly true. Unlike an exclusive possession of authority, the keys of the kingdom that our Lord gives to St. Peter belong to all leaders of the Church, not just the Apostles. The tradition of early Christianity unanimously understood the keys as being held by all the bishops with which they govern their local communities. But this reality of participation does not, once again, oppose the Catholic doctrine on papal primacy. That is because, as Dr. Jalland remarks, the fact that a plurality of rulers can exercise powers of binding and loosing is "not inconsistent with the provision of a *final arbiter or referee*, whose function is to express *ultimately* the nature of the Church's decision."[36]

In other words, just because the keys are utilized by all the Apostles and bishops does not mean that the authority inherent with those keys is now flattened to be equal in each leader. Do not presbyters exercise the keys of the kingdom when they absolve sins? Does that mean presbyters and bishops are equal? In the same way, when bishops exercise the keys, this does not undermine a hierarchical head in the successor of St. Peter over all. Like Israel, the government of the people of God is stretched out in the form of a hierarchy. In that format, there is a plurality of authorities which gets stronger as it reaches a single point in a head of the college of bishops.

This note on hierarchical government is most certainly how St. Leo the Great interpreted the *Tu es Petrus.* For him, the Lord Jesus gave to all the leaders of the Church the power of the keys through St. Peter.[37] But, "not in vain was that which was imparted to all entrusted to one."[38] Rather than there being an equal possession of authority by all, the leaders of the Church receive their authority through St. Peter: "So then in Peter the strength of all is fortified, and the help of divine grace is so ordered that the stability which through Christ is given to Peter, through Peter is conveyed to the Apostles."[39] Christ wished that the gift of apostolic government should "concern of all the apostles, but in such a way that He has placed the principal charge on the blessed Peter, chief of all the Apostles: and from him as from the Head wishes His gifts to flow to all the

[36] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 624.

[37] Pope Leo, Sermon 4, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 279.

[38] Pope Leo, Sermon 4, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 280.

[39] Pope Leo, Sermon 4, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 280.

body: so that any one who dares to secede from Peter's solid rock may understand that he has no part or lot in the divine mystery."[40]

The Orthodox should not be predisposed to oppose this, for, as noted above, they already subscribe to the idea that the presbyters utilize the keys of the kingdom to absolve sins, all the while the bishop has a preeminence in exercising the same keys.[41] In some sense, the office of metropolitan, archbishop, or patriarch has a canonical authority over bishops as well. Perhaps one of the most common misperceptions is that the Catholic Church has completely absolutized the keys of the kingdom to St. Peter and his successors alone. Meanwhile, the Catechism of the Catholic Church has made it plain as follows:

> The power to "bind and loose" connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority *to the Church* through the *ministry of the apostles* [Matt 18:18] and in particular through the *ministry of Peter*, the only one to whom he specifically *entrusted the keys* of the kingdom.[42]

Herein is a perfect way of showing both the general possession of the keys by the whole Church as well as the unique right of the Apostles and St. Peter. And if it were unclear that this passage teaches that the whole Church has the keys, the Catechism says elsewhere:

> If the Church has the power to forgive sins, then Baptism cannot be her only means of *using the keys of the Kingdom*

---

[40] Pope Leo, Letter 10, §1, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604010.htm.

[41] Of course, some Orthodox might be ready to concede this nuance, but not so for the position of primacy in the church of Rome. This may derive from the fact that the pope does not stand in relation to the bishops in the same way that a bishop stands in relation to his presbyterium. The bishops, in both Orthodox and Catholic ecclesiology, have the fullness of the priesthood by virtue of ordination. The pope is not ordained with a certain fullness of priesthood over other churches. Be that as it may, there is no functional blockade from having a hierarchical relationship between otherwise equal bishops, in terms of the sacramental priesthood, that entails an accountability of all to one on the basis of some other divine arrangement. In Catholic theology, the concept of a college with a single head is the dynamic which characterizes the structure of the Apostles and the episcopate.

[42] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition (New York: Doubleday, 1995), §553.

> *of heaven* received from Jesus Christ. The Church must be able to forgive all penitents their offenses, even if they should sin until the last moment of their lives.[43]

Speaking to the Sacrament of Penance, the Catechism explains:

> The apostles and their successors carry out this "ministry of reconciliation," not only by announcing to men God's forgiveness merited for us by Christ, and calling them to conversion and faith; but also by communicating to them the forgiveness of sins in Baptism, and reconciling them with God and with the Church *through the power of the keys*, received from Christ: [The Church] has *received the keys* of the Kingdom of heaven so that, in her, sins may be forgiven through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit's action. In this Church, the soul dead through sin comes back to life in order to live with Christ, whose grace has saved us.[44]

The second passage that is used from the New Testament to show the primacy of St. Peter is where, following his thrice denial of the Lord, Peter is given the office of shepherd to the lambs of Christ (John 21:15–17). During the three times that the Lord charges St. Peter to "feed" the sheep, the second instance uses a unique Greek word, ποιμαίνω, which can mean more than just shepherding but also ruling.[45] While this passage seems to be overshadowed by the *Tu es Petrus*, it is the Lord's charge to St. Peter to be the universal shepherd that makes for a more significant argument during the patristic era in order to prove that the successors of St. Peter, as bishops of the church of Rome, have an immediate job from the King of kings to be responsible for the "care of all the churches."

By this note, the primacy of St. Peter and the Roman See are not derived from canonical legislation nor of a post-apostolic creation of the Church for the sake of practical governance. Rather, the King of kings immediately charged St. Peter, and in him his successors as well, to govern the universal Church. With such an immediate job responsibility, nothing stands between the popes and the universal Church as an obstacle to this task of shepherding. This is the scriptural foundation,

[43] *CCC*, §979 (emphasis added).

[44] *CCC*, §981 (emphasis added).

[45] Other instances of ποιμαίνω in the New Testament are Matt 2:6; Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15, all of which have the idea of kingly rule.

therefore, to the Vatican's insistence that the jurisdictional rights held by the popes are immediate, ordinary, and direct. No one in the Church can come between Christ and St. Peter in order to give permission to the pope for his governance.

The third most often cited passage is Luke 22:31–32, where Christ is said to have prayed for St. Peter's faith, such that, having been weakened by his thrice denial, it would be strengthened once again in order to then strengthen the Apostles. Catholic scholars have pointed out that Christ singled out St. Peter's faith over of the rest in order to show that it was his role to be the Rock of the Church. This passage was used throughout the Middle Ages in order to prove the divine establishment of St. Peter's successors as the help, strength, and infallible guide of the universal Church. Of course, the context of this passage includes the event of St. Peter's faith plummeting into failure under the fear of men. It stands to reason, therefore, that this prayer of Christ should not be understood as absolute exclusion of any lapses in faith for either St. Peter or his successors.

There is another section of Scripture which is not normally utilized to convey the idea of St. Peter's primacy but which affords a massive opportunity. That is the Council of Jerusalem (49), where the Apostles gathered with the elders to resolve the dispute over whether Gentile converts to Jesus Christ should be circumcised and be required to keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved. This event is used by both Protestants and Orthodox to undermine the primacy of St. Peter in favor of the primacy of St. James. However, it should be noted that there is no biblical basis to support St. James's authority over the Apostles. Moreover, when St. Paul describes his visit to Jerusalem in an effort to confirm his ministry with the original Twelve, he includes information that clearly set St. Peter, rather than St. James, as the one divinely dedicated to evangelize the Jews.[46]

We can see that St. Peter was understood to be uniquely set over the Jewish mission just as St. Paul was singly set over the Gentile mission. That would effectively put St. James in an inferior position, at the least. Besides this, there are significant details about the Council of Jerusalem

[46] Gal 2:6–9: "And from those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me; but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as *Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised* (for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me for the Gentiles), and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

that indicate St. Peter had a decisive role. St. Luke records at the opening of the Council that St. Peter said it was specifically by his mouth that the Gentiles heard the Word of God in the first place.[47] St. Peter was God's choice to decide the matter. To challenge the words of St. Peter here would be tantamount to challenging and "testing" God himself. St. James appears to have taken note of this: "Brethren, listen to me. *Symeon has related how God* first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. . . . Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God."[48] Therefore, in the very first substantial dispute in the early Christian mission, it was St. Peter's privilege and task to bring the matter to resolution. Any opposition to this would have been a clear test of God's own will. Now, this material isn't explicitly giving detail how St. Peter's authority was superior to all others. Interpretations can reasonably vary. However, the record of St. Luke is consistent with that, less consistent with the view that St. Peter was an equal with all others, and even less compatible with the view that St. Peter was inferior to St. James.

[47] Acts 15:6–9: "The apostles and elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, 'Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you make a trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

[48] Acts 15:14, 19.

## *Chapter Eight*

# The Papacy in the Pre-Nicene Era

## Clement I (96)

Surveys of papal primacy usually begin with the famous epistle of Pope St. Clement I written to the church of Corinth in order to address the internal schism between rival presbyters. Rome had, "without being asked, intervened on its own authority"[1] to write a letter, "fraternal but authoritative,"[2] in order to admonish the Corinthians back to proper church order. It is significant that the Eastern church in Corinth, located in Southern Greece, just West of Athens, is a subject of concern for the church at Rome.[3] Moreover, the letter strikes one as written from the standpoint of one who is taking responsibility to admonish the Corinthians to obedience to God. Be that as it may, it does not arise to the level

---

[1] Beresford Kidd, *The Roman Primacy: To A.D. 461* (London: The MacMillan Publishing Company, 1936), 11.

[2] J. N. D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 8.

[3] Dr. Jalland notes how Corinth had been established as a Roman colony in 44 BC, and some have pointed to this capital/colony relationship (see Laurent Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* [Washington, DC: Euclid University Press, 2007], 150) as a way to explain this sense of responsibility for Church affairs in Corinth by Rome as quite natural. However, this is only one possible explanation, and some have recognized something far beyond and more general than this; see Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 103.

of evidence of papal primacy that would make it of any conclusive value. While it stands as a considerable piece of historical data on the leadership initiative of Rome, the conclusions to be drawn can go in more than one direction.

## St. Ignatius of Antioch (107–110)

Another common reference is to the holy martyr St. Ignatius of Antioch, whose letter to the church at Rome described her as one who "presides over love." This may have been used to argue, using terms such as "preside and "love," for the presidency of St. Peter's successor over the universal Church, otherwise signified by the community of the "agape" (love), that is, the universal Church. While that is certainly possible, it can also mean something far less papal than this. With that said, the majority of scholars acknowledge that the Roman church was active in coming to the aid of many other churches even distant to itself. But, like the letter of Pope St. Clement I, this letter of St. Ignatius can be read in many more ways than one and should be disqualified from being considered as strong and conclusive historical evidence on which to base papal primacy.

## St. Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202)

The first considerable testimony of the early primacy of the Roman church comes from St. Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202), an early Christian apologist highly regarded by both Catholics and Orthodox. During his time, St. Irenaeus waged war against the Gnostic heretics, those who claimed to reach a "perfect knowledge" of divine Revelation even surpassing the comprehension and teaching capacity of the Apostles themselves. As a result, they ended up with all kinds of beliefs which contradicted what Christians knew as the truth delivered once and for all. One tactic of St. Irenaeus was to point to the *visible* and *tangible* criteriology of apostolic succession:

> It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to *see the truth*, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles *manifested throughout the whole world*; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles *instituted bishops* in the Churches,

> and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times.[4]

Since error can be known by its deviance from the truth, St. Irenaeus points his readers to where the truth can be found: the apostolic churches. This methodology can be contrasted with the hyper-pneumatological thinkers who felt comfortable, if need be, divorcing the preaching of the Truth from the apostolic office. For St. Irenaeus, being able to visualize an embodied principle for the Truth was paramount in his fight against the Gnostics. Apparently, St. Irenaeus did not get the memo from Khomyakov:

> The only *guarantors* of the genuineness of such traditions were those leaders of congregations who could trace their unbroken succession back to the apostles. The positive effect of this principle of apostolic succession was to *assure* the place of tradition as an essential element of the Church's faith and theology."[5]

However, since there are so many apostolic churches to choose from, he then restricts himself to pointing to the tradition as taught by the Church "established at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul. . . . For it is a *matter of necessity* that every Church should *agree with this Church*, on account of its *preeminent authority*."[6] This passage has been a matter of dispute since not only is it a Latin copy of St. Irenaeus's original Greek, which we do not have record of, but also the Latin *potentiorem principalitatem*, which is translated as "preeminent authority" in the above, can be translated in a number of ways. Dr. Jalland translates it "superior origin," indicating that the contextual range of meaning to *principia* is closer to the second century understanding.[7]

Interestingly, Shotwell and Loomis, both Protestant scholars,[8] trans-

---

[4] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm (emphasis added).

[5] Karl Baus, *History of the Church, Vol. 1: From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, eds. Jedin and Dolan (New York: Crossroad Publishers, 1986), 197 (emphasis added).

[6] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[7] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 112. See also Robert B. Eno, SS, *Teaching Authority in the Early Church* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1984), 45.

[8] For a critical review by a Catholic, see John M. Lenhart, "Review of *The See of Peter* by J. T.

late that "unto this Church, on account of its *commanding position*."[9] The other controversial portion from the Latin is *convenire ad*,[10] which can mean either "to agree with" or "resort to."[11] In either case, some unique superiority is attributed to the Roman church over all such that all the churches must agree with or resort to it in the effort to maintain the correct Apostolic Tradition. As such, the Roman church acted as a referee or reliable guarantor of doctrinal purity. According to Fr. Klaus Schatz, the *potentior principalitas* of Rome is the grounds upon which "the universal tradition of all the churches can be more clearly and reliably demonstrated."[12] Jalland concurs with seeing a clear testimony of the "Roman see as a *norm in questions of faith*."[13]

According to St. Irenaeus, therefore, the doctrinal integrity of the Roman See by approximately 180 was pristine on account of its origin or superior authority. Now, let me be clear in saying that none of the foregoing from St. Irenaeus proves beyond shadow of doubt the doctrines of the supremacy or infallibility of the Roman Pontiff. There is certainly substantial evidence even if it can lead to additional alternative explanations. At the very least, this means that what Rome had to say about the Apostolic Tradition should be taken as certain. This doctrinal reliability, well furnished by St. Irenaeus, the understanding of Rome's primacy in the mind of Pope St. Victor I, a contemporary of St. Irenaeus, should be all the more seriously considered. If the pope during St. Irenaeus's time held to a view of papal authority that signifies a semblance to the

---

Shotwell, L. R. Loomis," *The Catholic Historical Review* 14.2 (July 1928) 266–272, www.jstor.org/stable/25012524.

[9] *The See of Peter*, eds. J. T. Shotwell and L. R. Loomis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 267.

[10] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 113n2.

[11] S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 36–42.

[12] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 10.

[13] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 115. To add to this, the late Msgr. Pierre Batiffol summarizes in much the same way: "Irenaeus says that it is fitting that all the Churches should come to the Church of Rome as to the most sure deposit of the Apostolic Faith, and because it is the *Ecclesia principalis*, that is to say, the Eldest Church which was established in the person of Peter on the day when Christ pronounced the *Tu es Petrus*, the Church of which all the other Churches are but young sisters. The justification of the central authority recognized in the Roman Church is in the deposit of Faith which it preserved in safety and in the *principalitas* which it held from Peter. It is Irenaeus who says this, and Irenaeus is a Greek" (Batiffol, *Catholicism and Papacy: Some Anglican and Russian Difficulties* [London: Sands & Co., 1925], 110–11).

Catholic doctrine, then St. Irenaeus's testimony on the reliability of the Roman tradition should duly inform us of how to grade its reliability.

## Pope St. Victor I: Asiatic Churches and Pascha (180)

At the request of Pope St. Victor, the churches abroad were gathered into synods to firmly establish a consensus for the day on which to celebrate Easter. Synods were held in both the West and East. All of these synods were unanimous in decreeing that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday of the week on which the fourteenth day of Nisan fell, or Quartodeciman. The early historian Eusebius of Caesarea tells us that this custom was the one held "throughout the whole world" and that the decisions of all these synods were communicated "to all the churches in all places."[14] However, there was one exception. The Asiatic bishops who assembled in the synod held in Ephesus, under the headship of St. Polycrates, decided that Easter had to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of Nisan, rather than the first Lord's day following, and that this practice was, in their understanding, the "rule of faith."[15] To their surprise, "both groups thought they could appeal to Apostolic Tradition in support of their own view."[16] In St. Polycrates's letter to Pope St. Victor, he adamantly states that the bishops in Asia will not conform to the worldwide view since they "ought to obey God rather than men."[17] In response to this, Pope St. Victor, most likely reacting to how the Asian bishops saw their practice as the "rule of faith," attempted to cut off the churches of Asia from the "common unity,"[18] that is, from the universal entity of the Church's communion.

This was an unmistakable "example . . . of a Pope claiming the right to interfere in other churches,"[19] and the "earliest known example of the Roman bishop exercising jurisdiction."[20] Msgr. Batiffol is right to make the this observation: "But how remarkable it is that, about the year 190, the bishop of Rome should excommunicate, in a kind of peremptory edict,

[14] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 23* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 181.

[15] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 23*, 182.

[16] Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, 270.

[17] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 23*, 182.

[18] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 23*, 183.

[19] J. N. D. Kelly, *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 12. Kelly also notes on the same page that Pope St. Victor had excommunicated Theodotus of Byzantium, an Adoptionism heretic, and deposed Florinus from the priesthood. No further explanation provided.

[20] Henry Chadwick, "The Early Christian Community," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 36.

the Churches of the provinces of Asia."[21] Perhaps even more remarkable is that, despite many bishops disagreeing with the course taken by St. Victor, there is no evidence of their denying the pope's right to do so, nor that by doing so was he acting *ultra vires*,[22] that is, exceeding his rights. Any of the local synods had the power to remove other churches from their communion, but to enact an excommunication to remove a church from the common unity requires the supreme right of excommunication. Synodal excommunications, when performed in concert, had been enacted to withdrawal communion from other churches, "but for one bishop singlehandedly to excommunicate the whole church of another province was as yet unprecedented."[23] Shotwell and Loomis comment that this pope was the first, as far as they know, to regard himself as a "commander."[24] On the other hand, the late Anglican critic of papal primacy, F. W. Puller (1843–1938), was quick to point out that St. Victor was indeed acting *ultra vires*:

> It was, of course, in the Roman bishop's power to exclude them *from the communion of the Roman Church*. In those days it was in the power of every bishop to decide who was to be in the communion of his church, and who was to be excluded.[25]

However, since Pope St. Victor sought to remove the bishops and churches of Asia from the "common union" of all the churches generally, Puller concedes that the pope "*endeavored*" to exercise universal jurisdiction, "but he failed in his endeavor."[26] Another of England's opponents of the papacy, Edward Denny, who somehow managed to reject that Christ appointed a head over the Church altogether,[27] concurs with Puller here that Pope St. Victor merely "endeavored" to enact such universal

---

[21] Pierre Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911), 227.

[22] E. Giles, *Documents*, 19. Giles, himself an Anglican, was taking from Fr. Luke Rivington, who says: "Not a hint is given all round that any one of the Churches disputed St. Victor's authority" (Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter* [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894], 43).

[23] Shotwell and Loomis, eds., *The See of Peter*, 277.

[24] Shotwell and Loomis, eds., *The See of Peter*, 274.

[25] F. W. Puller, *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 18.

[26] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 18.

[27] Edward Denny, *Papalism: A Treatise on the Claims of the Papacy as Set Forth in the Encyclical Satis Cognitum* (London: Rivingtons, 1912), 13.

excommunication, as well as in the restriction of Rome's jurisdiction to excommunicate only insofar as it concerns her own boundary.[28] At least these Anglican writers can recognize that the claims being made by St. Victor go "far beyond the preeminence attributed to it as the guardian of apostolic tradition," and are "only explained by the Roman bishop's awareness of his ability to intervene authoritatively in the affairs of even distant churches."[29] The famous Protestant historian, Philip Schaff (1819–1893) comments on this episode in Pope St. Victor I's history:

> But a century later the bishop of Rome was substituted for the Church of Rome, when Victor in his own name excommunicated the churches of Asia Minor for a trifling difference of ritual. *From this hierarchical assumption there was only one step towards the papal absolutism of a Leo and Hildebrand, and this found its ultimate doctrinal climax in the Vatican dogma of papal infallibility.*[30]

Surely, this may be a bit excessive insofar as Pope St. Victor's consciousness is concerned, but it stands uniquely sufficient as a testimony which lends way for further development. Abbé Fr. Vladimir Guettée (1816–1892), a fierce critic of the papacy who converted from Catholicism to Russian Orthodoxy, precedes the two authors above in saying that St. Victor was merely attempting to exercise universal jurisdiction but was unsuccessful[31] And yet, as Fr. Luke Rivington observed, not one bishop contested the pope's authority to do what he claimed, "but they *exhort*, and *protest*, and *warn*, and *entreat* him not to do so."[32] A right to do something doesn't mean it will carry prudence nor moral excellence. It was to be expected, even inevitable, that many bishops did not support the pope in his decision.

Unfortunately, we do not have any precise details on how this controversy was handled in the end. While it is often held that St. Victor relented his judgment, it can be overlooked that perhaps the other bishops did not realize that the synod of Ephesus was claiming that their

---

[28] Denny, *Papalism*, 252.

[29] Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, 358.

[30] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume II: Ante-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100–325*, eighth ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 158 (emphasis added).

[31] Fr. Vladimir Guettée, DD, *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867), 58–59

[32] Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter*, 43.

practice was *the* "rule of faith," which comes very close to suggesting the entire world was contradicting that rule, including Rome and the other churches. In any case, the pope of the Roman church, the church which St. Irenaeus extolled as that with which all must agree, was making claims to universal jurisdiction as far as the province of Asia by the end of the second century, and the precise nature of the protest against the pope was not a violation of rights but a violation of charity. As we will see, this habit of taking responsibility over the practice of all the churches will continue from the Roman See onward, and the reader is either left to acknowledge this was a legitimate part of the Christian tradition or that Rome was already, this early on, far off the rails from orthodoxy. Lastly, while some have understood the disputes over Easter to have been handled eventually at the Council of Nicaea (325), the Church still had to deal with them as late as the fifth century.[33]

## Pope St. Callistus I (218–222)

During the beginnings of the third century, there had been disputes concerning the Church's power to absolve the graver sins of her members, particularly adultery, apostasy, murder, and blasphemy. Rome had held to the tradition that even the worst of sins could be forgiven by the ministry of the Church, but a certain rigorist faction arose to contest this. This called for the pope to make a certain decree against those who denied the Church's power to forgive even the gravest iniquities. This was performed by Pope St. Callistus I in a certain edict wherein he teaches that the Church can reconcile excommunicated members who commit serious sexual sins and other disciplinary matters, for which he won sharp criticism from the contemporary St. Hippolytus (170–235). This Callistine edict reached North Africa and brought reforms in the territories affecting the prominent early apologist and presbyter Tertullian, who by this point in his career, rejected the idea of an ecclesial pardon for adultery and fornication, among other sins. In his *De Pudicitia*, Tertullian opposes the decree of the pope and accuses the latter of acting *ultra vires*. He writes:

> I hear that there has even been an edict set forth, and a peremptory one too. The *Pontifex Maximus*[34]—that is, *the*

[33] Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, 272.

[34] "Chief priest."

> *bishop of bishops*—issues an edict: "I remit, to such as have discharged (the requirements of) repentance, the sins both of adultery and of fornication."[35]

Tertullian goes on to reject the use of the *Tu es Petrus* to permit the absolution of these sorts of sins. This is explained by a shift in his career. Prior to becoming a Montanist, Tertullian was very much a high churchman, investing much in the authority of the bishops as successors to the Apostles, a man supportive of the need for a union between the apostolic office of institutional bishops and the transmission of the Gospel word. This was to change as bearing with the human element of the Church can prove to be a great annoyance, and Tertullian went from a man emphasizing the capacity of the priestly office to turning to the charismatic spiritualism of self-proclaimed prophets in the Montanist movement.[36] This fiery rejection of the papal edict was most certainly during the Montanist phase of Tertullian's career, which means that he was not in opposition merely to papal authority but even to the authority of bishops if they intended to impose themselves based on the legal status of their office.

According to J. E. Merdinger, Tertullian's Montanist bias implies that ecclesiastical position "confers no special privileges; rather, it is the possession of the Spirit that grants a person authority."[37] The position which sees the bishop or priest as having the *potestas* (power) to forgive sins even if he were inwardly sinful was repudiated by the rigorists, and this mentality would continue in North Africa into the Novatianist and Donatist schisms. The Catholics would maintain that the Church's visible nature requires that the office of the priesthood retains valid sacraments and, to some extent, teaching authority even if the person holding the office is a sinner.

By way of observation, Tertullian mocks the pope's edict by referring to him as the *Pontifex Maximus* and *episcopus episcoporum*. It seems

---

[35] Tertullian, *On Modesty*, ch. 1, §3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0407.htm; some scholars think that this reference to Pontifex Maximus was toward Tertullian's own bishop of Carthage, Agrippinus. See Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1990), 54. Against this, see Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 144n4.

[36] See "Tertullian's Variations," in *Primitive Catholicism*, by Batiffol, 264–93.

[37] J. E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 33.

reasonable to interpret this as another instance of the bishop of Rome acting as a commander in churches outside his own district. By saying it was an edict (*edictum peremptorium*), Tertullian signifies that this document sent from the pope resembles a script from the Roman emperor and can "close a trial and put an end to all controversy."[38] Tertullian obviously read the decree as Rome's claim to primacy over Africa, a problem that would come up again in forthcoming years.[39] The Orthodox might say that this fails at being admissible evidence because Tertullian resists it. However, Tertullian is at the point of resisting the authority of bishops just as much. Tertullian, in other words, had undergone an ecclesiological revolution, from the principle of apostolic succession, as adduced so well by St. Irenaeus, to the principle of the invisible Spirit. Moreover, if we had to choose between Tertullian and Pope St. Callistus I, the latter being venerated in the Orthodox churches on October 14, I think the latter is to be preferred, of course.

## St. Cyprian of Carthage (200–258)

During the middle of the third century, St. Cyprian was ordained to the episcopal chair of Carthage. For St. Cyprian, the whole order of Church government finds its genesis in the *Tu es Petrus*, which makes St. Peter the first bishop, and the foundation for the entire episcopal government of the Church. It is with his writings that we get the first real corpus with a robust treatment of the Petrine architecture of the Church's government, a motif which will be picked up by later Fathers in specific reference to the See of Rome. The Church, in the Cyprianic schema, is a community radically united in faith and sacramental discipline, and this unity is embodied in the episcopal society that is founded upon and makes up the Chair of Peter (*cathedra Petri*). Of all the early Fathers, St. Cyprian stands out the most in relationship to the subject of the papacy because he is a saint who, from such an early period, claims that at the very foundation of the Church is the office of one man, the Apostle Peter. The visible unity of the Church is rooted in the words of Jesus Christ, "*Tu es Petrus*."

> If any one consider and examine these things (i.e., *unity of the Church*), there is no need for lengthened discussion and

[38] Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, 289.

[39] Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, 290.

> arguments. There is easy proof for faith in a short summary of the truth. The Lord speaks to Peter, saying, "*I say unto you, that you are Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*" And again to the same He says, after His resurrection, "*Feed my sheep.*" And although to all the apostles, after His resurrection, He gives an equal power, and says, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you: Receive the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins you remit, they shall be remitted unto him; and whose soever sins you retain, they shall be retained;" *yet, that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one* [*man*]. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power; *but the beginning proceeds from unity.*[40]

St. Peter is at the heart of the Church's unity, which is, for St. Cyprian, unbreakable. The Church is "one, and cannot be rent asunder nor divided. Rather it is everywhere interconnected and joined by the glue of sacred bishops mutually adhering together with one another."[41] Of this cohesion, the Apostle St. Peter is the source or origin of its unity. Utilizing the analogy of the plurality of rays from a sun, the many branches from a tree, and the many streams flowing from a foundation, St. Cyprian communicates a special relationship between unity and plurality, where the latter proceeds from the former. While there are many rays of the sun, there is one single light. While there are many branches, they all come from one trunk and one root. While there are many streams of water, they all come from one fountain as the source of the water flow. In other words, while there is a certain multiplicity of beings, they are all united by a common source. For St. Cyprian, "Unity is preserved in their source."[42] If any of

---

[40] Cyprian of Carthage, Treatise 1, On the Unity of the Church, §4, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050701.htm (emphasis added).

[41] Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 66, 8.3, in *On the Church: Select Treatises*, trans. Allen Brent (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 33.

[42] Cyprian, Epistle 66, in *Select Treatises*, trans. Allen Brent, 155.

the rays, branches, or streams were to ever be disconnected from their source, they no longer share in the unity that comes from that source. This is how he conceives of the episcopal government. The many bishops proceed from the one source, St. Peter's Chair, and so long as they remain in that unity, they have a legitimate tie to the Church. Insofar as they break away from that one source, they lose that union.

While there are many bishops, there really is only one Petrine Chair that all partake in, each individually. Just like the one light from the sun is divided into many rays, each ray is simply a participation of the one light. The many rays, branches, and streams are unified by their source. Their source is the principle by which they retain unity with itself. This is where we get the idea of a *principle of unity* that plays an important part of the doctrine of the papacy:

> Upon him he builds His Church, and to him he hands over in trust his sheep to be fed and, although he might assign to all the apostles equal power, he however established one Chair and ordained by his own authority that Chair as the *source of unity and its guiding principle.*[43]

Each bishop, therefore, is organically required to retain his participation in that singular Chair of Peter in order to retain his valid position as a bishop. The inevitable question, however, is precisely how is each bishop supposed to validate his unity with this original source in St. Peter? Going back to the analogy of sunrays, branches, and water streams, all of these retain their unity to the source by a physical continuity traced back to the source. The light is physically continuous back to the sun as its source. The branches are physically connected to the trunk which is equally connected to the root as its source. The streams of water are physically traceable back to the original font.

How then is a bishop continuously traced back to St. Peter? As it turns out, a bishop is continuously traced back to St. Peter by a proper ordination to the episcopate. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the instrumental means of plugging a bishop into the Petrine unity. St. Cyprian writes: "Do you think that you will be able to stand fast and to live, whilst you withdraw from the Church, *setting up the foundations of other Chairs?*"[44] Clearly, one ruins his unity with St. Peter's Chair by trying to build a new

[43] Cyprian, Epistle 66, in *Select Treatises*, trans. Allen Brent, 152 (emphasis added).

[44] Cyprian, Epistle 66, in *Select Treatises*, trans. Allen Brent, 160.

Chair, which tries to build a new foundation rather than sticking with the original one. Indeed, not only is there one Chair that cannot be competed with but there also is the same indivisibility attributed to the *altar* of the Eucharist, the faith of Christians, the cult of the priesthood, Jesus Christ, and God himself.[45] To change the faith of Christians is to rebuild the foundations, and thus sever oneself from the Church. To construct another altar upon which to offer up and share in the Body of Christ is to rebuild another foundation and thus separate one from the Church's unity. But we are most interested in what St. Cyprian means by "Chair" and how one breaks union with it, as well as more details as to what this has to do with the historical man Peter.

What is it about St. Peter's Chair that makes it a *principle of unity*? What is a "Chair" to begin with? What is its function? And what does it mean for St. Peter, as opposed to the other Apostles, to occupy this Chair? In the first place, it should be noted that it is neither from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which is the principal source of St. Cyprian's idea about St. Peter's Chair, nor the rest of the New Testament that we get any clear description of this use of "Chair." The Latin *cathedra* would be καθέδρα in the Greek, and we get exactly three usages of this word (Matt 21:12, 23:2; Mark 11:15) in the New Testament. Other than two usages which describe the seats over which dove salesmen sat over in the Temple, there is one instance recorded in Christ's words: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on *Moses' seat* (καθέδρα); so practice and observe whatever they tell you."[46] However, St. Cyprian doesn't explicitly tie St. Peter's Chair to Moses's Chair even though it would have been appropriate for him to do so. At the very least, we can observe that the Greek καθέδρα was used to describe the position of the Pharisees and scribes in the Temple, and thus the office of teacher who can oblige obedience to the law of Moses.[47] St. Cyprian therefore must be taking from the Roman culture of his day, and utilizing the analogy of *cathedra* to explicate the meaning of the Church's governmental constitution from the *Tu es Petrus* Matthean text.

According to Dr. Allen Brent, perhaps the foremost Cyprianic scholar in the English-speaking world, the prerogatives of a bishop are in terms

[45] Cyprian, Epistle 43, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 50.

[46] Matt 23:2–3.

[47] If there was anything to glean from the occurrence of the Greek words referring to or modifying "Chair" or "Seat" in the Biblical narratives of Moses, it would be from Exodus 18:13, which depicts Moses sitting to judge disputes, controversies, and questions from the Israelites.

of authority, power, and spiritual jurisdiction over a "spatially bounded territory," and his Chair symbolized his "juridical" and "didactic" function, much like the Chair of a magistrate symbolized his imperium.[48] Moreover, the "the exercise of imperium within a sanctified divine space was symbolized by occupying a chair: unless the chair were vacant of a lawful holder of authority, like the sacred space itself, any other person attempting to occupy it was engaged in an act of sacrilege."[49] While it is certain that St. Cyprian gives the bishops a teaching function, thereby including the idea of a chair of teaching, he also attributes the idea of priestly governance, which Dr. Brent finds paralleled in the position of power in Roman civil and political context.[50] A monarch who sits over the sacred space and governs is symbolized by his chair. In one place, St. Cyprian writes:

> They are the Church who are a people *united to the priest*, and the flock which *adheres to its pastor*. Whence you ought to know that the bishop *is in* the Church, and the Church *in the* bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that *he is not in the Church*.[51]

In another place:

> For from this have arisen, and still arise, schisms and heresies, in that *the bishop who is one and rules over the Church is contemned* by the haughty presumption of some persons.[52]

And yet another:

> For neither have heresies arisen, nor have schisms originated, from any other source than from this, *that God's priest is not obeyed*; nor do they consider that there is one

[48] Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4. *Imperium* means "authority to command."

[49] Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 62.

[50] Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 62.

[51] Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 68, §8, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050668.htm (emphasis added).

[52] Cyprian, Epistle 68, §5, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

> person for the time priest in the Church, and for the time *judge in the stead of Christ.*[53]

It is simply unmistakable that St. Cyprian understood the bishop's Chair to involve that of a position of authority in teaching and jurisdiction over his flock. Such is a safe conclusion. But there are two outstanding issues that need to be resolved as this relates to the Catholic doctrine of the papacy. First, the Cyprianic schema sees every ordained bishop as fully occupying the throne of St. Peter. What then is special about the episcopal throne of Rome? Secondly, the supreme difficulty in St. Cyprian's thought is an apparent inconsistency. He clearly attributes the Roman concept of an authoritative cathedra to the office of bishop, and yet for St. Peter the Apostle, the very original Chair-holder, St. Cyprian seems to deny any unique authority over the Apostles or the Church at large. How can the bishop, in St. Cyprian's thinking, hope to have authority over his diocese as holding the place of St. Peter if St. Cyprian does not think that St. Peter had any jurisdictional authority over anyone? In a letter to a certain Quintus, St. Cyprian admits that primacy belonged to St. Peter but that he did not claim "anything to himself insolently, nor arrogantly assume anything; so as to say that he held the primacy, and that he ought rather to be obeyed by novices and those lately come."[54]

Any student of St. Cyprian can see a tension here. The bishop is a guiding principle of unity for the flock since he is owed obedience and submission in doctrine and discipline. And yet, St. Peter, in St. Cyprian's mind, the very paradigmatic archetype of a bishop, is an equal to those for whom he is a guiding principle? For many years, both Anglicans and Orthodox have made use of St. Cyprian as a way to prove that all bishops are equal in authority, preventing the papal principle from making room for one bishop as a jurisdictional primate over all other bishops. In effect, all bishops are equal successors of St. Peter. What does the Cyprianic dogma of equal episcopalism do to the claim of the Catholic Church of a Petrine supremacy? Did the popes introduce a new and foreign teaching

---

[53] Cyprian, Epistle 54, §5, *New Advent* (emphasis added). Here, I see "who for the time is judge instead of Christ" as the very concept criticized in Catholicism by some Orthodox theologians reviewed in "Epistemological Considerations," 53, above.

[54] Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 70, §3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050670.htm.

by claiming primacy over others? To answer these questions, one must look further into the dispute with Rome that St. Cyprian later found himself in.

It is well known that St. Cyprian ran into conflict with Pope St. Stephen I (254–257) over the rebaptism controversy. The pope surely held that his unique cathedral succession from St. Peter equipped him with a special authority over the whole Church. This was, in fact, "the first occasion on which the bishop of Rome is known to have invoked the text of Matthew 16:18 to justify his primatial jurisdiction."[55] We know this for two reasons. First, in a letter from St. Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea, to St. Cyprian, the former describes the pope as follows:

> And in this respect I am justly indignant at this so open and manifest folly of Stephen, . . . he who so *boasts of the place of his episcopate*, and contends that *he holds the succession from Peter*, on whom the *foundations of the Church were laid*.[56]

Secondly, the pope thought he was sufficiently equipped to enforce the Roman policy on rebaptism over the church of North Africa on pain of excommunication. Clearly, he understood his Petrine rank endowed him with authority over other bishops. While St. Cyprian certainly does not come to agree with Pope St. Stephen on this, there are a couple more interesting scenarios that took place before the baptismal controversy which add *further incoherence* to St. Cyprian's ecclesiological theory, and a number of scholars have picked up on this. Firstly, a disturbance to the church in Arles had occurred when her bishop, Marcian, had become an open Novatianist heretic. Faustinus of Lyons, along with other colleagues, had written to Sts. Cyprian and Stephen in order to receive help since they most likely felt inadequate to intervene into the church of Arles, being responsible for their own flocks. It is most likely that St. Stephen had already received letters on this matter before St. Cyprian wrote his letter, otherwise the latter would not have felt the need to urge the pope to action. St. Cyprian may have been told that the pope was either silent

[55] Chadwick, "The Early Christian Community," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. McManners, 36.

[56] Firmilian, Epistle 74, §17, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050674.htm (emphasis added).

or wrote back with a mere suggestion for Arles to handle the situation itself. However, this issue called for direct intervention, for one part of the episcopate to come to the aid of another. St. Cyprian urged the pope[57] to write letters which would enforce the excommunication of the heretic Marcian and have another installed in his place. Here is what St. Cyprian wrote to the pope:

> Let letters be directed by you into the province and to the people abiding at Arles, *by which*, Marcian being excommunicated, another may be substituted in his place, and Christ's flock, which even to this day is contemned as scattered and wounded by him, may be gathered together.[58]

The bishops of Gaul obviously felt the need for the confirmation of greater authority before moving forward with the excommunication of the Arletine heretic. And St. Cyprian, instead of merely replying and telling Faustinus of Lyons to judge Marcian on the basis of his recommendation, wrote to the pope and urged him to take direct authoritative intervention in the same manner in which his predecessors did for other matters. There was, therefore, some sense of primacy to the bishop of Rome in St. Cyprian's mind.

In another epistle written to Pope St. Cornelius in order to admonish him to reject the status of a schismatic bishop, we see a striking description of the Roman church that weaves into the fabric of Cyprian's ecclesiological paradigm. Certain schismatics[59] had sailed to Rome from Carthage in order to gain the recognition of the pope, and it was essential for the latter to be forthright in abstaining from their communion. St. Cyprian writes:

> After such things as these, moreover, they still dare—a false bishop having been appointed for them by heretics—to *set sail* and to bear letters from schismatic and profane persons to the *throne of Peter*, and to the *chief church* whence

[57] Cyprian, Epistle 68, in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 399.

[58] Cyprian, Epistle 66, §3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050666.htm (emphasis added).

[59] Felicissimus and his associates who ordained Fortunatus as the rival Bishop of Carthage against St. Cyprian.

> priestly *unity takes its source*; and not to consider that these were the Romans whose faith was praised in the preaching of the apostle, to whom faithlessness could have no access.[60]

In this passage, even one Anglican scholar had to admit that it "implies that the Church of Rome is a *centre of unity for the whole Church*."[61] While it can't be denied that certain statements made by St. Cyprian elsewhere indicate he saw each bishop having equal authority, Fr. John Chapman has it right when he takes opportunity from reading this above passage to make a point worthy of some consideration: "But even so, what a place this single passage assigns to Rome!"[62]

Hopefully it is clear enough by now that some of the major concepts from his treatise on the *Unity of the Church* show up elsewhere in the Cyprianic corpus, and this above citation shows how the concept of Petrine unity pertains, in some unique way, to the church of Rome as being the environs of the real historical throne of St. Peter himself. We saw how St. Cyprian conceived of a multiplicity as a unity if the former is tied to its single source. We saw how he understood all equal bishops having their one and undivided unity being preserved in their source, that is, *cathedra Petri*. We also saw how severance from the Chair of Peter was the essence of schism. But more could be said about what it takes for bishops to retain their connection to that Chair. Various and incomplete statements were made such as the "agreement of bishops," which acts as the glue uniting them, or the fact that constructing a rival bishop against an established bishop severs from the "root" and "womb" of the Church.

---

[60] Cyprian, Epistle 54, §14, *New Advent* (emphasis added); Latin from E. Giles, *Documents*, 58n3. Some scholars have sought to reduce the scope of Rome's principality. Interestingly enough, one Anglican scholar, A. Theodore Wirgman, DD, DCL, states the following: "We cannot well limit the meaning of *unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est* to the probable fact that the Bishop of North Africa and Italy traced their Apostolic succession to the Roman see. *It implies that the Church of Rome is a centre of unity for the whole Church*" (Wirgman, *The Constitutional Authority of Bishops in the Catholic Church* [New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899], 90).

[61] Wirgman, *The Constitutional Authority of Bishops in the Catholic Church*, 90 (emphasis added). Another Anglican of recent history, W. H. C. Frend, wrote: "In the West, Matt. 16:18 was being interpreted literally, as the Lord's will, and we have seen how Peter's see was regarded by Cyprian as the origin and seat of episcopacy with which communion must be maintained" (Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 1984], 400). Of course, Frend also observes how St. Cyprian didn't think this implied he was bound to obey the commands of Rome.

[62] Fr. John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), 45.

But these statements only yield further questions related to the essence of Peter's Chair and how its unity is maintained and regulated.

Here in the above quotation from *Epistle 54*, however, St. Cyprian says that the "unity of the priesthood," which just means the unity of bishops, took its rise from the "Chair of Peter" *in Rome*. Instead of the origin of St. Peter's Chair being some invisible floating principle, free for the taking of any episcopal claimant, here we see the Chair of Peter referred to as a concrete, embodied, and visible criteria stationed in a fixed location, that is, *the Roman bishopric*. What is the nature of the correlation?

Reviewing the analogy of multiplicity and unity from St. Cyprian's *Unity of the Church* will help in understanding just what it could mean to say that the unity of the bishops takes its origin from Rome. He spoke of the plurality of sunrays, branches, and water-streams. These, while a multiplicity, are really united by their common union with a common source, be that the sun, root, or fountain. In the same way, bishops are a multiplicity throughout the world, and yet they are unified by their common union with a common source, namely, St. Peter's Chair. Is it coincidence that the Roman church is where St. Peter presided before he gave up his life in martyrdom? The unity of the priesthood took its rise from St. Peter, whose ministry ended as the presiding ruler of the Roman church. According to the late Fr. Ludwig Hertling, S.J. (1892–1980), a German Catholic priest and historian, this idea of Rome being the origin of episcopal unity could not have been, *consecutively speaking*, the case since the Church began in historical sequence from Jerusalem, and so he notes:

> Cyprian's *exorta est* must therefore be a present perfect, referring to the once-for-all and ever renewed origin from Rome of the communion linking the bishops. Rome is thus the focal point of the communion, not as the geographical center but as the center of its power and legitimacy.[63]

Dr. Brent, who thinks that St. Cyprian modified "his view of Roman primacy in the light of his dispute with Pope Stephen,"[64] understands that prior to that, he understood

[63] Ludwig Hertling, S.J., *Communio: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1972), 59.

[64] Brent, *Select Treatises*, 39.

> *Rome as the centre*, as it were, of the network of inter-episcopal communion and recognition. Thus all other bishops might be, like the other apostles, "of equal power," nevertheless they should use that power to maintain unity by "*sticking fast to the unity with Peter*," namely, *the bishop of Rome*.[65]

This use of priestly power while only in union with Rome harkens back to Hertling's description of the center of power and legitimacy for the bishops. There is no skirting the puzzle here of how St. Cyprian sees all bishops occupying their individual place in one Chair of Peter while also attributing *some unique relationship* of that Chair to the Episcopal Chair of Rome. Had he not made the statement under consideration, Anglicans and Orthodox would have been able to say that Rome had no distinctive function in relation to the Chair of Peter since all bishops going back to the very Jerusalem mission occupy that Chair. In other words, the church of Rome would just be another church having the same essential governmental constitution as any other church, according to Anglican and Orthodox ecclesiology. Any unique Petrine descriptions that have been given are not, in this line of thinking, on the level of the essence of the priesthood, but are purely moral and honorific. But since, for St. Cyprian, the Chair of Peter is not merely a moral or honorific position, as it belongs to the bishop of his flock, so also the Petrinity

[65] Brent, *Select Treatises*, 151 (emphasis added). In a different work, Brent comments on Epistle 59, in which Cyprian refers to the Roman See as the *Chair of Peter* and the *principal Church*: "Here Cyprian clearly has a higher view of the papacy (to which one ms reading of his work refers, namely the Received Text of Unit. Eccl. 4–5) than that maintained later, in his controversy with Stephen of Rome. The bishop of Rome becomes the *centre of the web of intercommunion* formed by the mutual recognition of bishops throughout the world"; see Allen Brent, *On the Church: Select Letters* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 161 (emphasis added). In his review of Geoffrey D. Dunn's *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome: Questions of papal primacy in the early Church*, Brent makes the following observation concerning Cyprian's ecclesial perspective on Rome: "Cyprian's view of the Church is of a network of bishops bound together by the bonds of mutual recognition and inter-communion, as Dunn is aware, but the logic of such a network is that it has, like the weaving of a piece of cloth, a starting point in the process. This theological sense, derived from his theological model of the undivided 'robe' of Christ, is what for him necessitates *Rome as the centre of the web as it were, holding its unity together*. Thus I believe that Cyprian, in his confrontation with Stephen, was wrestling with a problem of his own (and not, as Dunn believes, of Stephen's own) making. How is the episcopal college to react when the exordium behaves differently from how the model predicted that it would and ought to behave?" (Allen Brent, "Review of Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome by Geoffrey D. Dunn," in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59.3 [2008]: 521–523).

that St. Cyprian attributes to the Roman church must have some comparable attribute. Fr. Aidan Nichols best explains how to solve this Cyprianic puzzle:

> Scholars confessionally or temperamentally hostile to "Roman claims" have noted quite correctly that for Cyprian every local church is founded on Peter and has the same power as Rome. But while this is true, Cyprian says of no other church that it is the *locus Petri* or the *cathedra Petri*. The key to resolving the problem lies in what Cyprian has to say about the significance of Peter vis-à-vis the other apostles. Peter has the same power as the other apostles, yet they received theirs after him. His chronological priority over the college is the foundation of its unity. . . . Just as the apostles received the single episcopate by entering into solidarity with Peter who had received it first, so the bishops of the churches retain their due episcopate by entering into, or remaining in, communion with that church whose foundation is the most primordial. The Roman church inherits the one role which is Peter's alone (in contradistinction to the other apostles), namely, to manifest the unicity of the Church. . . . Although the unity of the bishops (and through them the unity of the churches) is not achieved through communion with Rome (but through fraternal intercommunion and the direct succession of each from the common source), nevertheless, *it is only by communion with the Roman church that the bishops know and can demonstrate that they are united amongst themselves, and that this unity is the same as that which Peter himself signified at the beginning. Rome is thus for Cyprian the necessary centre of unity because it is the necessary sign of this primordial unity.*[66]

[66] Aidan Nichols, "The Appeal to the Fathers in the Ecclesiology of Nikolai Afanas'ev: II. From Cyprian to Denys," *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992), 253–54 (emphasis added). Somewhat following this, albeit less forcefully, is Fr. Robert Eno, who takes the Cyprianic phrase *Cathedra Petri* to mean the universal mystical symbol of episcopal unity (Eno, *Rise of the Papacy*, 57–59), but then recognizes that Cyprian, undergoing some theoretical "turning point," achieves a "key breakthrough," wherein the "Petrine-Unity concept would be extended to the contemporary successors of Peter on the *cathedra episcopalis* of Rome." As a result, the "theological symbolism associated with Peter in Cyprian's mind is here *transferred to Rome*," (Eno here is commenting on Cyprian's reference to Rome as the *ecclesia principalis*); see Eno, "The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology," *The Thomist: A Speculative*

And yet, while this seems to be straightforward from basic Cyprianic concepts, there is no disputing that St. Cyprian, emboldened by his zeal for purity in doctrine, opposed Rome's edict enforcing conformity to her tradition on receiving converts already physically "baptized" from heretical sects. In other words, St. Cyprian at once gave the foundational logic for why all bishops must retain their unity with the universally unifying Chair of Peter in Rome and then also posited that he did not need to submit to the authority of Rome's binding decrees. There is an internal

---

*Quarterly Review*, volume 37, number 4 (October 1973), 670–80 (emphasis added). Eno treats this extension of the Petrine-unity concept further and poses the inevitable question which Cyprian never seemed to answer for himself: "Is the Roman see the symbolic embodiment of unity for the whole Church the way a bishop himself is for each local community?" We shall never know. One seventh century saint, venerated by both Catholics and Orthodox, is St. Isidore of Seville (560–636) who takes up the Petrinology of St. Cyprian (and gathers it from Popes Innocent, Boniface, Leo, and Gregory) and argues for the general investiture of the Apostles and the episcopate with the powers of binding and loosing, but sees St. Peter and the bishops of Rome as occupying a principle of unity that binds the Apostles and the bishops. In one letter he wrote: "But concerning the question of the equality of the apostles, Peter takes precedence over the others because he deserved to hear from the Lord: 'You will be called Cephas' . . . and he first received in the Church of Christ the honor of the priesthood not from any other but from the very Son of God. . . . It was said to him even after the resurrection . . . 'Feed my lambs' (John 21:25). *Christ designated the prelates of the churches by the name of lambs.* Although his dignity of power is transferred to all Catholic bishops, yet in a special way and with a singular privilege *it remains forever higher to the bishop of Rome as the head than to all the other members.* Thus whoever, separated from the head, does not reverently exhibit the due obedience to him, renders himself subject to the schism of the Acephali (headless)" (St. Isidore, Letter 8, "To Bishop Eugenius," quoted in *Rise of the Papacy*, by Eno, 60). For more on the Roman primacy in the mind of St. Isidore, as well as the authenticity of the letter to Eugenius, see Alberto Ferreiro's chapter, "Petrine Primacy according to Isidore of Seville," in *Epistolae Plenae: The Correspondence of the Bishops of Hispania with the Bishops of Rome*, The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, vol. 74 (Boston: Brill, 2020); St. Bede the Venerable (673–735) also testifies to this common power of binding and loosing given to the whole apostolic ministry (see A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2017], 128), but also finds a unique role for St. Peter: "The blessed Peter . . . received in a special way the keys of the kingdom of heaven and preeminence in the power of judging, so that all believers throughout the world might understand anyone who separates themselves in any way from the unity of faith or of this fellowship cannot be absolved from the bonds of sin, nor can they enter the gate of the heavenly kingdom" (Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. L. T. Martin and D. Hurst [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Studies, 1991], 203, quoted in Catherine Cubitt, "Images of St. Peter: The Clergy and the Religious Life in Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Paul Cavill [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004], 44). See also the clear testimony of how St. Bede reported on the unique and supreme possession of the keys of the kingdom by St. Peter and his successor in Rome in *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, rev. R. E. Latham (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1955), 192.

collision of foundational principle in St. Cyprian's own thought! He certainly drew a straight line from St. Peter to the office of bishop, but how can we deprive the universal community of the Church of a principle of unity while we fight without end to have a principle of unity in the local community? Does not the universal Church deserve its mechanism for unity? If it is so important for the local church to maintain its singleness, then how much more the universal Church? Moreover, if the local church is unified in her bishop, then the universal Church should be unified in its bishop, a universal bishop or, to pay due respect to St. Gregory the Great, a universal servant of the servants of God unto whom all are subject when disputes require it.

Monsignor Pierre Batiffol, who likens St. Cyprian to a Gallican,[67] gets right to this empty spot in St. Cyprian's argument in the following:

> When we view his treatise in this perspective we understand why he devotes his attention exclusively to the oneness of the *cathedra* in each church, and insists on it to such an extent as to seem to forget that the bishop, in each particular church, *is dependent on Catholicism as a whole*. . . . The unity of the chair of Peter safeguards both in doctrine and in discipline the unity *of the whole episcopate.* In the *De Unitate Ecclesiae* Cyprian did not reflect on this higher unity; and because he confined his attention to each bishop in each Church, he was led to lose sight of the guidance of the Holy Ghost *promised to all.* Catholic unity thus took on the appearance of a political confederacy, dependent on the ever unstable good will and the ever fallible freedom of individuals.[68]

Batiffol gets right to the heart of the problem. St. Cyprian wanted to forge the unity of the Church upon the position of the bishop for the local diocese but then depend on spontaneous agreement among the bishops as the forge of unity among churches making up the universal Catholic union. This incoherence doesn't escape even Orthodox

[67] Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, 333.

[68] Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, 364–65. St. Cyprian's one-sidedness, as Batiffol calls it, is that he strives for a jurisdictional authoritarian figure in the office of bishop for local unity, but this Petrine schema for unity doesn't apply for universal unity. For unity to be achieved in a local setting through an episcopal office only renders it more necessary for unity to be achieved on a universal scale through the papal office.

theologians. The late Russian Orthodox Fr. Nicholas Afanasiev,[69] professor of Church history and canon law at St. Serge Orthodox Theological Institute (Paris), realizes that St. Cyprian attributes a unique place and function to the Roman See as noted by Brent and Nichols. He notes, however, that St. Cyprian, despite having all the theoretical data in place to have "one single bishop at the head of the Universal Church," was "unwilling to place the bishop of Rome outside the *concors numerositas* of bishops, and yet the place given by him to the Roman Church did raise it above the 'harmonious multitude.'"[70] While he claimed Rome as the source of priestly unity and therefore the guiding principle of episcopal unity (since it was the Chair of Peter *par excellence*), this clashed with his doctrine of autocephalous-episcopal equality, "which did not allow him to make the bishop of Rome head of the episcopate." Instead, Pope St. Stephen was the one who "drew the necessary conclusions himself,"[71] those conclusions being that the "Roman bishop claimed his monarchical power . . . on his claim as Peter's heir to the authority of the chief of the apostles, to bind and loose and to be obeyed by other bishops."[72] "Logically," says Fr. Afanasiev, "it was inevitable."[73] Seeing as he, according to St. Firmilian, legitimized his universal jurisdiction on the basis of his succession from St. Peter. Recognizing that St. Cyprian's incoherent theory failed and crashed "before his own eyes,"[74] Fr. Afanasiev notes that the ideal of just expecting the bishops to always and perpetually agree "cannot work without a head,"[75] or, as St. Cyprian himself referred, a guiding principle of unity.

Brent also agrees that this ecclesiology of equal bishops accountable to the Lord alone failed "abysmally,"[76] especially at the Council of Chalce-

[69] Nicholas Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 91–144.

[70] Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. Meyendorff, 98.

[71] Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. Meyendorff, 99.

[72] Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 352.

[73] Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. Meyendorff, 99.

[74] Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. Meyendorff, 99.

[75] Afanasiev, "The Church Which Presides in Love," in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. Meyendorff, 99.

[76] Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 328. E. Giles agrees. When commenting on the sixth canon of Nicaea which spells out the subordination of churches to the supra-metropolitanate of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch, he states: "The Nicene Fathers clearly had no use for Cyprian's theory that 'each prelate has the right of his free will in the administration of the Church.' It was seen to be unworkable" (Giles, *Documents*, 93). Following this is Eno, who says this "hoped for unity is inevitably undermined and contradicted by Cyprian's principle that 'each bishop is responsible to God alone'" (Eno, *Rise of the Papacy*, 58). St. Cyprian

don where, following its completion, the unity of the Church had been broken into large segments in Egypt, Syria, and Armenia.[77] St. Cyprian appears to think that the agreement of the one episcopate will just maintain itself in clear manifestation. However, such a presumed idealism proved not to guarantee the unity of the Church. Obviously, such a feat would be fantastic! However, like with Khomyakov, it is an assertion of the eschaton far too ahead of God's timing. Noting how the bishops at Chalcedon accepted Pope St. Leo's Tome, Brent sees in this the death knell of Cyprianic episcopalism, and the maintenance of the papacy.[78]

As it would turn out, the Petrinological architecture of a source or origin without its being an authoritative guiding principle died with St. Cyprian, and the Roman tradition survived, as was the pattern of all forthcoming episodes of Western resistance to Rome. This was not going to die easily, however. During the climax of St. Cyprian's dispute with the pope, the former reached the following ideology at the Council of Carthage (256) after hearing of threats of excommunication from Rome. The allusion to the pope is unmistakable:

> For neither does any of us set himself up as a *bishop of bishops*, nor by tyrannical terror does *any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience*; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has the power both of preferring us in the government of His Church, and of judging us in our conduct there.[79]

---

would have been shocked to have stood before the claims of patriarchal jurisdiction made by Photius of Constantinople; see Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization See through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 137; see also Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, "Patriarch Photios on the Powers of the Patriarch," in *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 115. Therein it is written by Photius that all questions of ecclesiastical nature should be referred to the throne of Constantinople for its final adjudication and decision. This contributed to the *Epanongoge* on the rights of the emperor and patriarch under Emperor Basil I.

[77] Today known as the Oriental Orthodox communion.

[78] Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 328.

[79] Council of Carthage (257), "On the Baptism of Heretics," §2, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0508.htm (emphasis added).

This statement is most likely made as an indirect rejoinder to the pope's binding decree and threat of excommunication. This would, at the very least, demonstrate that Pope St. Stephen I, who is venerated as a saint in the Orthodox Church (Aug. 2), claimed to have the right to exercise jurisdiction in North Africa, which was not part of the metropolitical boundary of Rome at the time. Even Fr. Guettée plays along with St. Cyprian here and finds a parallel to the protest of Tertullian against the edict of Pope St. Callistus I:

> The criticism made by St. Cyprian upon the title of bishop of bishops leads one to think that the Bishop of Rome endeavored even then to assume it, *and recalls a remark of Tertullian.*[80]

From there he goes on to say that while the bishops of Rome (Zephyrinus, Callistus, and now Stephen) may have attempted to assume high titles to themselves, the Church rejected them as the "evil fruit of pride and ambition."[81] However, should such accusations be our first resort toward the saints? What cannot be missed is that Popes St. Victor and St. Callistus, both preceding Pope St. Stephen by many decades, would not have said that St. Stephen was introducing a novelty. Such is readily admitted by Guettée. Be that as it may, St. Cyprian's words above are an unmistakable claim to episcopal autonomy, independence, or ultra-autocephalism. It could even be considered as a way of indirectly attempting to isolate the local Church so much to its own authority as to make each bishop of each church its own papacy, tantamount to being "judged by no one." One wonders just how this would cohere with St. Cyprian's former insistence that bishops such as Novatian, Fortunatus, or Marcian were all to be, through a disciplinary intervention of the Church, openly judged as condemned, excommunicated, and severed from communion. Could not each one of these bishops have said the very same line St. Cyprian gives at this Carthaginian council in order to stave off excommunication? The late Anglican Dom Gregory Dix (1901–1952) picked up on this inconsistency when he noted how St. Cyprian had no qualms with urging the pope to excommunicate Marcianus of Arles and replace him with another, but "when another pope later on threatened to declare Cyprian himself *abstentus* over a comparable error on baptism, it

[80] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 78. See commentary on Tertullian and Pope St. Callistus.

[81] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 78.

was a different story!"[82] He goes on to say that this inconsistency makes it "difficult to see what the difference in principle there could be as to the pope's right to act thus in the second case, if it was admitted in the first."[83] St. Cyprian provides no answer to that inconsistency.

Unfortunately, we have no evidence of St. Cyprian ever recanting his willingness to be severed from the communion of Rome, but he is lauded as a saint for his martyrdom, which may be the primary cause of his canonization. Despite all of the above, Anglicans and Orthodox have pointed to this emboldened Cyprianic autonomy as a way to prove that papal supremacy had no place in the early to mid-third century. This, however, would be a hasty conclusion. It is clear, as almost all scholars recognize, that Pope St. Stephen, like his predecessors St. Callistus and St. Victor, enacted to exercise universal jurisdiction in North Africa and Asia,[84] and so this view would be, at least, as equally antique as St. Cyprian's episcopalism. Moreover, Pope Stephen not only does so, but his is the first record we have of a pope appealing to the *Tu es Petrus* in order to legitimize his actions. In must be asked of the Orthodox: If St. Cyprian's witness counts, why is it that St. Stephen's witness does not count? One cannot merely point to the existence of one and automatically claim victory for it. Either one is right, or both are wrong. And if one is right, it should be shown how it is right. This is why a full treatment of the history, as well as what came before and after, is necessary to make an informed decision. If the testimony of St. Vincent de Lérins has any weight on the scales of this debate, his statements looking back at the situation are to be considered:

> Once on a time then, Agrippinus, bishop of Carthage, of venerable memory, held the doctrine—and he was the first who held it—that Baptism ought to be repeated, contrary to the divine canon, contrary to the rule of the universal

[82] Dom Gregory Dix, O.S.B., *Jurisdiction in the Early Church: Episcopal and Papal* (London: The Church Literature Association, 1975), 122.

[83] Dix, *Jurisdiction in the Early Church: Episcopal and Papal*, 122.

[84] Some critics of Papal primacy see the claims made by popes themselves to be inadmissible evidence, for popes would naturally have a bias in favor of their authority. However, in both Catholicism and Orthodox, the fact that Pope Stephen is a venerated saint renders this restriction of evidence unfounded. The view of Cyprian is not automatically more considerable just because he happens to have contested papal primacy any more than Cyprian's conciliarism is automatically discredited because he was one of its earliest proponents. Both saints and their views are to be given equal consideration, however distinct our final deductions may be. Other factors would have to weigh in for a fair contest.

> Church, contrary to the customs and institutions of our ancestors. . . .
>
> When then all men protested against the novelty, and the priesthood everywhere, each as his zeal prompted him, opposed it, Pope Stephen of blessed memory, Prelate of the Apostolic See, in conjunction indeed with his colleagues but *yet himself the foremost*, withstood it, thinking it right, I doubt not, that as he *exceeded all others in the authority of his place*, so he should also in *the devotion of his faith*. In fine, in an epistle sent at the time to Africa, he laid down this rule: "Let there be no innovation—nothing but what has been handed down." For that holy and prudent man well knew that true piety admits no other rule than that whatsoever things have been faithfully received from our fathers the same are to be faithfully consigned to our children.[85]

If it were true that, as St. Cyprian said, the pope required obedience of the North African Church, threatened excommunication, and so positioned himself to be accused of trying to be a "bishop of bishops," then St. Vincent of Lérins's (venerated by the Orthodox, May 24) defense of the pope appears to be a defense for the pope's claim of rights to intervene in North Africa. But even so, the Orthodox have a valid retort if they posit that such papal ecclesiology was not universally embraced.[86] One could say St. Cyprian's view was not universally embraced, as well. The assumption behind this objection is that in order for something to be shown true, it must be universally accepted, but huge sections of the Nicene Creed were not universally accepted until doctrine more fully developed. This should suffice to show that a lack of universal acceptance at one point in time does not prevent a particular belief from rising to the level of unquestionably certain belief later on. Such is the nature of doctrinal development. Speaking of which, St. John H. Newman had the following to say in response to his reading of the relevant third century scuffle:

---

[85] Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, ch. 6, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[86] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 81. While he concedes to the presence of bishops of Rome claiming to be able to exercise authority over the universal Church, he responds, "But we also see that the whole Church protested against these ambitious pretensions, and held them of no account" (Guettée, *The Papacy*, 81).

> As to St. Cyprian's quarrel with the Pope, strong letters came from the Pope to him. He certainly did not think the Pope infallible in those letters. I cannot tell without hunting them up, whether they look like *ex cathedra* letters. I should think not. I doubt very much whether the point of the Infallibility of the Pope was clearly understood, as a dogma, by the Popes themselves at the time; but then I also doubt whether the Infallibility of a General Council was at that time understood either, for no General Council as yet had been. The subject was what Vincentius calls "obscurely held." The Popes acted as if they were infallible in doctrine—with a very high hand, peremptorily, magisterially, fiercely. But when we come to the question of the analysis of such conduct, *I think they had as vague ideas on the subject as many of the early Fathers had upon portions of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.* They acted in a way which needed infallibility as its explanation.[87]

## Rome: Apostolic Judge (250–313)

Even prior to the time of St. Cyprian's episcopate, the bishop of Rome had functioned as doctrinal arbiter and judge of heretics. In 268, the bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata, found himself deposed for heresy and was replaced by a certain Domnus. Following protocol, Domnus went to take possession of the bishop's residence in Antioch only to find that Paul didn't want to leave the premises. The historian Eusebius tells us that the Antiochenes, needing assistance from the state, petitioned the Emperor Aurelian, and the latter ordered "the building to be given to those to whom the bishops of Italy and of the city of Rome should adjudge it."[88] Rome had also condemned the Monarchian Theodotus of

[87] Newman's letter to Mrs. H. Froude (March 1871), quoted in full in Wilfred Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 378–79, all taken from *Keys of the Kingdom: A Tool's Witness to Truth*, by Stanley Jaki (Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1986), 188n35 (emphasis added). It can also be accessed online, "After the Council (1871–1874)," in *Life of Cardinal Newman*, vols. 1 and 2, *The National Institute for Newman Studies*, http://www.newmanreader.org/biography/ward/volume2/chapter31.html.

[88] Eusebius, *Church History* 7.30, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 1, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm (emphasis added).

Byzantium, Sabellius, and others.[89] In 254, two bishops (Basilides and Martial) from Spain had been deposed due to denying the faith under persecution, and afterwards, Basilides appealed to the pope to get his position back as bishop, and the pope ended up restoring both of them as bishops. This caused a schism in Spain, since some communicated again with the deposed bishops. Interestingly enough, St. Cyprian was consulted by the Spanish bishops, and the former judged that the pope was deceived[90] and that the original verdict deposing these two men should stand without question.[91] One interesting episode concerns St. Dionysius (260), bishop of Alexandria, who was understood by some of his contemporaries to be teaching against the eternality of the Son of God.[92] They brought these accusations to Pope St. Dionysius of Rome, who then assembled in a council and wrote up a decree condemning at the same time both Sabellianism and the idea that the Son was created. It turns out that St. Dionysius of Alexandria was falsely accused and had always subscribed to the eternality of the Son. What draws attention here is the laying before the court of Rome's bishop a problem occurring in Alexandria in the East. However, that isn't what draws the most attention. St. Athanasius the Great comments on this Roman council which condemned that the Son was created. For St. Athanasius, the judgment of the pope in this Roman synod (261) had been a universal anathematization of Arianism years before his own day:

> For Dionysius, Bishop of Rome, having written also against those who said that the Son of God was a creature and a created thing, it is manifest that not now for the first time but from of old the heresy of the Arian adversaries of Christ has *been anathematised by all.*[93]

After the Donatist schism broke out in North Africa, the Donatists petitioned the Emperor Constantine for a fresh trial. They were summoned to the court under Pope St. Miltiades. Although the matter

[89] Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, 358.

[90] St. Cyprian denies no right of Rome to hear appeals.

[91] Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, 358.

[92] St. Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 43–44, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 81.

[93] St. Athanasius, De Sententia Dionysii, §13, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Archibald Robertson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2810.htm (emphasis added).

was substantially resolved in Rome, the Donatist bishops appealed, once again, to the emperor. Out of generosity, Constantine gave them another chance at a new court at a larger council in Arles (314). This council, however, felt the need to write to the pope, by then the newly installed St. Sylvester (314–335), in order for him to promote their decisions abroad. One statement made in the letter draws attention. In it, the bishops explain to the pope that he was not present in Arles to judge the matter "since you were by no means able to leave that region where the *apostles daily sit*, and their blood without ceasing bears witness to the glory of God."[94] I take this idea of the apostles daily sitting as *Rome's daily work of hearing and judging appeals.* Since this occupies the time of the bishop of Rome, he cannot leave his station since he is at the service of all.

## Summary of Pre-Nicene Papacy

During this era, the Roman See had occupied a certain position of primacy, at least of some kind of leadership. The letter of Pope St. Clement to Corinth shows at least a certain level of responsibility felt for the churches of the East. St. Irenaeus's description of the Roman church entails that its origin by Sts. Peter and Paul make its doctrinal authority guaranteed to be without blemish, and that it served as a doctrinal norm for the universal Church. As such, the Roman church is supremely reliable. Pope St. Victor's authoritative motion for the churches scattered abroad East and West to hold synods concerning the question of the date of Easter shows yet another sign of universal responsibility and leadership. His eventual decision to excommunicate the bishops of Asia also shows a self-consciousness of authority over foreign regions.

The protests he received were not against the right to excommunicate but against the poor basis upon which to break the Church's unity. However, neither St. Clement's letter, nor St. Irenaeus's award to Rome for her doctrinal excellency, nor St. Victor's universal leadership speaks to a specific foundational theory for Rome's unique preeminence, and so the historian is left with a number of explanations, none of which needs to be the logic of the First Vatican Council. This does not mean that they were unaware of a theory of Roman primacy that accords with the Vatican Council. My observations here are simply in light of the limited amount of data and documentary evidence that exists today from which we can reconstruct the beliefs of the pre-Nicene era.

[94] Council of Arles, "To Silvester," in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 89.

Now, with the writings of St. Cyprian of Carthage, we have introduced, for the first time, a Petrinological architecture being posited for the Church's essential government, and it certainly involves Rome occupying some unique place amidst the churches of the world. This touches the realm of foundational theory, and it gets further treatment by St. Stephen of Rome. Pope St. Stephen appealed to his episcopate as being the one succeeding from St. Peter as a way to legitimize his action to enforce disciplinary law in North Africa and in Eastern territories. St. Cyprian himself did not draw these conclusions, but his principles should have led to that conclusion, as the cited scholarship even recognized. Furthermore, councils convened by the Emperor Constantine on behalf of the Donatists show that Rome was taking a leadership position in the publication of the final decrees of councils. Lastly, the accountability of St. Dionysius of Alexandria by the doctrinal court of Rome further proves this role of leadership, among other occasions. Even so, we must not forget that in all the foregoing circumstances, there was a sizeable opposition to the commands of the pope, an opposition which would have been unthinkable had they been fully convinced that Rome held the position that the Catholic Church teaches today.

*Chapter Nine*

# The Papacy and the Emergence of Imperial Councils

## Constantinian Revolution (272–337)

Prior to the Edict of Milan (313), the Church had great difficulties under persecution and was more of a society separated from the outside and mainstream world. Even during periods of peace and tranquility, pre-Nicaean Christianity was purposefully separated from the world in its own restricted community of "the saved." To speak of Church government was almost exclusively a discussion about local territories. Individual churches were practically self-governed. The Roman church, along with every other church, governed her own spatially bounded territory. Going outside of that territory would only occur when the situation demanded it.

As the need for wider management and good order increased, the primitive Church managed to utilize the Roman Empire as a model for how to manage Church business, particularly through regional synods with a permanent structure of a head (metropolitan) together with neighboring bishops. Unlike the Old Covenant, the Church of the New Covenant was not given an exhaustive and word-for-word pattern on how to conduct herself in all modes of her business. God told Moses, right from the beginning: "According to all that I show you concerning

the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, *so you shall make it.*"[1] With the earthly ministry of Christ the Lord and the Apostles, there does not appear to be an exhaustive "pattern" for all ecclesiastical business. For Old Testament Israel, there was the Book of the Law, and no matter what future generations brought, they could always fall back on the strict, clear, and word-for-word clarity of the Mosaic "pattern" to rebuild. Such a clarity did not exist for the New Covenant Church, and future generations found themselves adapting the Church's polity to the surrounding accidents of the Roman Empire.

This is, of course, not to say there was no foundational constitution whatsoever. Surely, there was the three-fold hierarchy: bishop, presbyter, deacon.[2] However, this three-fold hierarchy pertains to the local church and not for any higher order. For how to conduct Church government above the local principle, the New Testament does not include any clear instructions. Perhaps the Council of Jerusalem (49), where the Apostles gathered with the elders of Jerusalem, served as a paradigm for the Church's adoption of the imperial establishment for synodal procedure. Even so, this Scriptural paradigm required the additional use of the secular geo-political organization of the Roman Empire as a vehicle. The Council of Jerusalem was certainly not a council of all the bishops from evangelized regions. All that one can extract from it is the basic principle of conciliarity, that is, the Holy Spirit presides over a meeting of the elders.

When matters were affecting a number of churches in one Roman province, the early Christians found that placing such matters under the authority of the bishop of the metropolis of the province (i.e., the head city of a province) was more conducive to managing the Church's business. Possibly already operational during apostolic times, the Church brought on ecclesiastical organizations which folded together with the geo-political organization of the empire. There was understood to be a metropolitan bishop of a certain province, under whose oversight episcopal ordinations, juridical disputes, and other matters were handled by means of *synod.*

[1] Exodus 25:9.

[2] Modern scholarship tends to put the institution of the monepiscopacy as a post-apostolic creation. Since both Catholics and Orthodox believe the three-fold hierarchy as being instituted by the Apostles, I won't venture to prove this point. However, one may consult Dr. Bryan Cross's (*Called to Communion*) response to an article by Protestant pastor Brandon Addison for another perspective: "The Bishops of History and the Catholic Faith: A Reply to Brandon Addison," *Called to Communion*, June 8, 2014, https://www.calledtocommunion.com/2014/06/the-bishops-of-history-and-the-catholic-faith-a-reply-to-brandon-addison/.

As early as St. Cyprian and the third century North African synodal procedure, we see the bishops using language to describe these synods in a way that resembles the convocations of the Roman Senate.[3] On this, and the forthcoming insights on the nature of what came to be the ecumenical council, I am almost entirely in debt to the work of Fr. Francis Dvornik.[4] We have evidence that the bishop of Rome took on leading initiatives for having synods convene throughout the provinces of both East and West to look into matters affecting the whole Church (such as the Quartodeciman question). We saw that the Roman church also received the complaints or appeals of other bishops, condemned heretics and their heresies, and that this was even recognized by the emperor himself.

In addition, there were other churches that had apostolic foundations that were considered "Apostolic Sees," and these carried greater prominence during the early Christian missions. The earliest Christian mission began in Jerusalem, but as the city's destruction and missionary activity carried onward, it was the "three megalopolises of the empire" (Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch) and other churches, such as Corinth and Ephesus, that became prominent sees.[5] It is no wonder then that we read of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch being recognized as having *chief* status. It was, since the beginning, partly[6] a result of their socio-political status as the lead cities of the Roman Empire. This method of organizing the Church by the political organization of the Roman Empire has been called by Fr. Dvornik the *principle of political accommodation.*

It has been used as a way to contradict the papal or Petrine principle of the Roman church, since the latter claims a privileged place of leadership based upon the apostolic pedigree of St. Peter and the specific investment given to him by Christ the Lord and handed down to his

---

3 Francis Dvornik, "Emperors, Popes, and General Councils," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 6 (1951), 4, www.jstor.org/stable/1291081. Dvornik states elsewhere: "This practice influenced the organization of the primitive Church along the lines of the political divisions of the Roman Empire. It was thus natural that to the bishops residing in the capitals of the provinces were left the initiative of convoking the councils and the privilege of presiding over their debates" (Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* [New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961], 10). See also Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, issue 9, vol. 2 (Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966).

4 See previous footnote.

5 Vittorio Peri, "The Role of the Bishop of Rome in the Ecumenical Councils," in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Cardinal Walter Kasper (New York: The Newman Press, 2006), 133.

6 It is possible that the Apostles themselves sought the great political centers for the sake of the benefits they had to serve as Mother Churches and landmarks wherefrom further missionary work could branch out and be referred back to.

successors. However, we need not necessarily see a contradiction here. As Dvornik claims, it seems reasonable to believe that the Apostles themselves adopted the model of planting churches in the chief metropolis city in order to establish an operational center for further missions. As such, it only follows that the Apostles would eventually make it to Rome, the chief city of the world.[7] There is, therefore, a convergence between apostolic foundation and political accommodation, as described by Dvornik.

The point to make here is that the pre-Nicene Church, however much it recognized the Roman church as the chief church (*ecclesia principalis*) on account of the ministry of Sts. Peter and Paul, already adopted the use of imperial organizations in order to conduct her business and to serve as a blueprint for further missionary activity and church planting. Consequently, we do not have an impenetrable barrier separating the apostolic principle of Church government and the political accommodation principle. So explains Dvornik.

The situation drastically developed when Constantine converted to Christianity. Beginning with the Edict of Toleration (313), he envisioned the way for the empire to become openly Christian and to worship the God of Christians. However, taking from the basic political ideology of Greek Hellenism, Constantine saw the religion of the people and the power of the state to be hand-in-hand.[8] While Constantine made it clear that he would not take a role in deciding doctrine on behalf of the Church, his consciousness as the emperor appointed by God to lead the people to God made him feel obligated to eventually apply force, military power, and imperial decretals in order to support the godliness of the Christian religion, which then makes a prosperous nation under God.

A perfect example of this comes by way of the Donatists, as pointed out by Fr. Dvornik, who refused to abide by the ecclesial mode of regional synods (Rome and Arles). The Donatists wouldn't abide by these decrees,

---

[7] By the time the Byzantine theologians sought to make the church of Constantinople the First See after Old Rome, it was not because they sought something entirely novel. They knew that the Apostles and Fathers made it a custom to fold together the Christian mission and the imperial organization. The bishops at the Council of Constantinople (381), therefore, probably had no intention to reject the Petrine foundation of the Roman church but only intended to follow the pattern that St. Peter himself laid in choosing the imperial city as the place of ecclesial primacy. This was certainly a stretch of the imagination, but it is more likely what they were thinking than the interpretation that often gets passed around, namely, that they saw only the imperial principle as grounding the early Roman primacy. On this, see A. St. Leger Westalle, "The Fathers Gave Rome the Primacy," *The Dublin Review*, vol. CXXXII (January–April 1903), 100–114.

[8] Dvornik, "Emperors, Popes, and General Councils," 7.

and so the emperor, originally desiring the Church to manage its own affairs through the synodal process, felt obliged to take matters into his own hands, and resolved the Donatist problem *by himself* enforcing the decrees of Arles on North Africa.[9] A time would come when the emperor would be "universally regarded as an office of the church," as is seen by his being "hailed as the thirteenth apostle."[10]

When the heresy of Arius had caused enough of a heartache for Constantine, he appointed a certain Spanish bishop, Hosius, bishop of Cordova, to travel to Alexandrian Egypt in order to resolve the disputes. Facing difficulties, he planned for a synod in Antioch (325), which attempted to refute and condemn Arius. When this proved a failure, Constantine convened a Council in Nicaea (325), summoning the bishops to arrive on a certain date.[11]

It is extremely important to see that this was a project begun *by the emperor and not the Church.* In fact, the Church did not have the legal or political machinery to put into action its own public ecumenical councils. The emperor provided "bishops the use of the imperial post carriages, and paid their expenses, thus making the hardships of the long journeys tolerable."[12] Granted, the churches had the synodal model through which to manage affairs on a regional basis, but for a worldwide council at one single time, to be convened and enforced throughout the empire would require "economical and logistical means afforded by state support."[13] We might say that something from the ecclesiastical tool box was mixed together with something from the imperial blueprint, and there you have ushered in the era of ecumenical (*imperial*) councils.

This observation is crucial to understanding the debate between Catholics and Orthodox on the matter of papal primacy. This is because the place of ecumenical councils is paramount to understanding ecclesiastical authority for both the Catholic and the Orthodox. But how could ecumenical councils carry such decisive gravitas if history tells us that, prior to the intervention of the Roman emperor, the Christian Church had no formal polity or blueprint to even imagine something like a

[9] Dvornik, "Emperors, Popes, and General Councils," 8.

[10] George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 36.

[11] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.16–17, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Chester D. Hartranft (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26021.htm.

[12] Fr. John Chapman, O.S.B., *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 10.

[13] Peri, "Role of the Bishop of Rome," in *The Petrine Ministry*, ed. Kasper, 139.

council of all bishops on behalf of the whole universal Church? As we saw from the Quartodeciman and Baptismal controversies in the pre-Nicene era, the *synodal institution* was habitual and instinctive, showing its clear apostolicity. But neither Catholics nor Orthodox attribute any sort of *a priori infallibility* to local synods.

How then can this novelty of an imperially organized ecumenical council produce a greater effect that the Church did not have in her essence prior to that? A look to what capacity existed in the Church as Christ made it in the first century should be observed. The Church's infallibility, if we can speak of it, lay in the active teaching of her voice, which belongs to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Theologians call this the "mind of the Church" or the "consciousness of the Church." When and if the Church can speak with one voice on a matter is when she is infallible. This seems to be promised from the New Testament which describes the Church as the "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). How is the Church's voice generated and recognized, is the question. In fact, that is the question to be asked before bringing ecumenical councils into view, since the Church's essence precedes the era of ecumenical councils.

Until the Nicene era, a variety of ways were thought to achieve a clear recognition of the voice of the Holy Spirit. In the first place, the Holy Scripture is God's Word, and so that was supreme and conclusive to resolve a great deal of theological inquiry. That proved to carry very far until different interpretations of Holy Scripture created rifts and divisions in the Body of Christ. As we saw with St. Irenaeus, and it finds a place in the writings of Tertullian[14] as well, an appeal to the embodied principle of apostolic succession as a visible guarantee for the proper interpretation of Scripture and Tradition served to avoid further divisions and needless schisms arising from the Gnostic theologians. Whatever distance this methodology proved useful, the Church quickly learned that within the community of apostolic succession, disagreements were had (e.g., Victor contra Asia). In this instance, early Christian apologists were found content to simply appeal to the belief of "the whole Church." One community might be in error, but many communities are far less likely to err. The principle of the whole as greater than the parts applies. And if many communities are in error, then consulting all communities worldwide

[14] See Tertullian, *Prescription Against the Heretics*, ch. 10–29, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Peter Holmes (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0311.htm.

would surely manifest the infallible truth. The whole is greater than the parts.[15]

Such a positive outlook may have been less problematic in the first two centuries of the Christian story. I am less inclined to think it proves workable by the time you get to the fourth century Christological debates. The principles of apostolic succession, the synodal institution, and Christ's promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20), certainly carried a lot of weight in ascertaining the Church's faith. What sort of accomplishment would this reach with the fiasco caused by the heretic Arius? The Council of Nicaea (325) would be, until then, the largest council that Christians had ever seen. It was thought that something so great as this would certainly capture the Church's mind, consciousness, and voice. If not that, then what? The council's letter to the Alexandrian church states quite plainly:

> In the first place, the impiety and guilt of Arius and his adherents were examined into, in the presence of our most pious Emperor Constantine: and it was *unanimously decided* that his impious opinion be anathematized.[16]

Besides Constantine having to exile a small number of pro-Arian bishops at the council, unanimity was successfully accomplished.[17] The largest and grandest council hitherto with a unanimous result would certainly prove the Church's voice has spoken, right? Yes and no. For whatever the Council of Nicaea was worth to the bishops of the fourth century, several more councils of great episcopal stature were held just within a few decades afterwards that sought to challenge its decrees. Soon enough, pitting one council against another council produced the same dilemma that was seen when the consensus of one territory appealed against the consensus of another territory, and further back when one interpretation

[15] This seems to be the summary reached in the Ecumenical Dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Venice (1976); see E. J. Yarnold, S.J., and Henry Chadwick, *Truth and Authority: A Commentary on the Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (London: SPCK, 1977), 10–21.

[16] Socrates Scholasticus, *Church History* 1.9, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. A. C. Zenos (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26011.htm.

[17] John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (London: The Folio Society, 2003; reprint of Penguin Books, 1990), 29.

of Scripture went against another interpretation of Scripture. Councils, therefore, of themselves anyway, did not always guarantee their own status as the *last infallible word* in the minds of countless fourth century churchmen. The history shows a number of theories that persisted in the minds of many theologians throughout the centuries. For some, a council's truth is simply verified by itself. The truth, as Vladimir Lossy said, is known inwardly, and can only be verified inwardly. This is another way of saying that those who know the truth will know the truth, and it proves itself *by itself*: a sort of self-evidentialism. This view rings terrifyingly similar to how Luther appealed, ultimately, to what his own reason could tell him over and against popes, councils, and church Fathers. Another theory would say that a council proves itself by a strong demonstration "of its harmony with the past, by its own intrinsic balance, and its place in the course of history."[18]

Quoting the Pharisee Gamaliel, the historian George Every sees this theory here stated in short: "If this thing be a counsel or work of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them."[19] That is, over the course of time, the councils that are true and infallible will be the better recognized because of their widespread acceptance. The last theory is that of the papal principle, or the Petrine protocol. This says if the pope, as the successor of St. Peter, firmly ratifies the decrees of a council, the council is, *de facto*, binding upon all and irreformable. This is rooted in the finality that comes with the power of the keys, with which he may open and no one may shut or he may shut and no one will open. To one degree or another, all of these theories capture some aspect of the reality. There were certainly voices who could be candidates for a more Lutheran paradigm of verifying God's voice, just as there were other voices who could be candidates for a more conciliar or more papal paradigm. At the very least, what would be the paradigm for the Catholic Church wasn't clearly defined at the time. Because of this, the student of patristic history will have to be content to hear a variety of theories without a solution to harmonize them into one coherent view. More on that in upcoming chapters.

For now, it seems all too important to emphasize that the very idea of an ecumenical council, as it was convened by Constantine, *was a novelty both in concept and being.* He himself presided at the council, "stiff with purple, gold, and precious stones, and in this pomp Eusebius compares

[18] Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate*, 36.

[19] Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate*, 36.

him to an angel of the Lord of Heaven."[20] Nothing anticipated this sort of phenomenon up to that time. An exterior layer had to be added to the already existing economy of the Church in order to be able to produce such a meeting. And this layer came in the form the secular emperor taking on a significant role on behalf of the Christian religion together with the adoption of the senatorial-convocation model to serve as a vehicle for the Church's own conciliar administration.[21]

According to Georgetown University Professor and Jesuit historian Fr. John O'Malley, as Christians "spread in the Hellenistic world, adapting as a matter of course and almost by osmosis common procedural models, they looked to the Roman Senate. The Senate made laws. It also rendered verdicts of guilt or innocence on persons accused of high-level crimes against the state and thus acted as a court of criminal justice."[22] At Nicaea, we see the emperor taking a lead initiative in Church affairs although not claiming to have a right in defining the faith of the Church. According to Fr. Dvornik, the Council of Nicaea had the following basic procedure:

> The emperor convoked the bishops as he convoked the senators, presided at the sessions of the council as he presided at the senate, and after making his relation called upon the members to state their point of view.[23]

This joint operation between the secular world and the holy Church is what came to make the *ecumenical council*, and it is only with the legalization and imperialization of Christianity that such a thing came about. The decisions of these councils, according to O'Malley, became the law of the empire and not just the Church.[24] The Council of Nicaea, representing a sort of novelty in the mode of Church government, "set patterns for the future."[25] All the forthcoming councils would be convened and semi-presided over by the emperors.

As can be expected, this sensitive cooperation came with the risk of

[20] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: Vintage Books, 1967; from original Pantheon Books, 1949), 314.

[21] To a great extent, this had already been going on as is evidenced in the Councils of Carthage prior to Nicaea (325).

[22] Fr. John O'Malley, *When Bishops Meet* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 14.

[23] Dvornik, "Emperors, Popes, and General Councils," 9.

[24] O'Malley, *When Bishops Meet*, 15.

[25] O'Malley, *When Bishops Meet*, 17.

taking the Church in directions that God would not have. From very early on, the Church knew that there would have to be a subservience of the state to the Church in ecclesiastical matters; otherwise, the emperors could usurp the right to govern the Church themselves, an office not given to them by Jesus Christ. The Church is the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and the vineyard of God. The very word *Church* (ἐκκλησία) means "called out ones," and the early Christians understood that they were called out from the world, where Satan and his demons rule, in order to humbly wait for the Son of God to return from heaven (1 Thess 1:10). For many years the early Church had considered the secular government the tool of the fallen world to attack the disciples of Christ. With this major turnaround, a cautious policy would need to be taken, lest the Church forget her own freedom endowed by Christ himself.

As long as the state recognized the right and proper order between the power of the state and the authority (*auctoritas*) of the Church's magisterium (teaching office), a workable program could come to materialize for the glory of God. Unfortunately, as history would come to show, this well-intentioned symphony of Church and state at times became disturbed, and the Church's autonomy in managing the affairs of salvation were not properly respected. Somehow, the Church would have to be able to sustain her own "sacred rights," as Fr. Dvornik called it. The only facet which retained the freedom of the Church from imperial overtake was that the emperor could not vote on doctrinal questions.[26] And the primacy of Rome was also safeguarded by "a precedent which guaranteed to the representatives of the Roman See the first place in conciliar proceedings."[27]

As the era of ecumenical councils shows, the pre-Nicaean primacy of Rome was not neglected nor forgotten. In fact, the bishop of Rome, either in himself or in the persons of representatives (legates), would act like the *princeps senatus* (first senator), which was the "most influential position in the Roman senate."[28] The judgement of the *princeps senatus* carried considerable weight in senatorial councils. Like the

[26] Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 16.

[27] Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 16.

[28] Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 16. This is why the legates of Rome always signed at councils first. The exception was at the Council of Nicaea, which had Hosius sign first. Debate has been struck about this, but it is likely that this was the case because he was the emperor's trusted agent in the convocation of the council. However, right after Hosius's name are the papal legates.

secular senate, the Church's ecumenical council would also have a *princeps senatus*, but Catholics would argue that the authority of this Roman position heightens in the kingdom of God the authority of St. Peter, and this is why the position of the Apostolic See of Rome was preeminent in the decision-making at ecumenical councils. If we compile the above findings about the Roman primacy in the pre-Nicene era with the era following the emergence of ecumenical councils, it appears perfectly fitting that Rome would have a leading position in the convocation and confirmation of these councils.

As much as Rome was always seen as first in the hierarchy, the emperor was not going to be simply looking on these councils from afar. One aspect of this new Christian-state establishment was that the right to convoke an ecumenical council was *reserved to the emperor alone*. It stands to reason that since, at this time, the Church did not perceive herself capable, within her own resources, to make an ecumenical council, the emperor's contribution would take to itself this right and responsibility. All the bishops of the Church recognized this and were satisfied with that arrangement, even if it was not understood as a dogma written in stone. Even the popes who were most conscious of their supremacy understood this and were able to play along just fine so long as the proper balance was in place. When and if the imperium and papacy were to work in harmony, it yielded great blessing. But this did not always occur. For example, Constantine himself fudged on the authority of Nicaea and felt obliged to support bishops who were seeking to change the doctrine of Christ's consubstantiality with the Father pronounced at Nicaea. Even worse, his son Constantius II (337–361), taking sides with the semi-Arian bishops, took for himself all that was implied in the concept of Hellenistic kingship[29] in order to convene his own ecumenical councils. Although Constantius II did not reserve to himself the right to define doctrine, as is evidenced by his reliance on councils, he was unfortunately led to add imperial authority to heretical decisions. Herein lie the curse of the Constantinian revolution. If and when the establishment was not willing to adhere to the "sacred rights" of the proper hierarchy of the Church with St. Peter's successor at the head, heresy became sanctioned by the state, and schisms or heresies plagued the Body of Christ. It is for this reason that the traditional pre-Nicene primacy of Rome, recognized by all the

[29] An ideological connection I credit to Fr. Dvornik.

ecumenical councils, made it requisite that conciliar decrees should not be the last word unless or until they were ratified by the pope.[30]

The implications of this would prove to cause major tension in the ecumenical Church and would eventually find itself being a major factor in the tragedy of the Greek and Latin schism. With the rise of the See of Constantinople, papal authority had come under several challenges by Eastern clergymen. When the emperor saw it possible to support the Eastern bishops against the pope, this certainly caused further rifts in communion between the two sides of the empire. Still worse, when emperors thought they could intervene in the doctrinal affairs of the Church, such as in the case with the Emperors Zeno, Justinian I, and Heraclius, this violation of the "sacred rights" of the Church caused a disturbance in the proper harmony of Church and state.

Returning to the matter of a criteria for the ecumenicity of councils, just how and why ecumenical councils came to be regarded as "infallible" is another phenomenon which underwent historical, qualitative, and conceptual evolution.[31] This does not entail an introduction of foreign or novel ideas into the conversation of the Church. Rather, the Church looks back upon the Tradition to pull out implications whose principles are already inherent in said Tradition. The process of recognizing which councils came to be respected as supremely authoritative was gradual, but it is by the end of the fourth century that the authority of the Roman See came to play a vital role in the resolution of doctrinal disputes. But this gradual process only goes to show that the emergence of the era of ecumenical councils was an addition to the Church's essential constitution. For the first three centuries, the Church knew nothing of ecumenically held councils, nor was there anything intrinsic in her nature that anticipated one. Therefore, the precise role and extent of the authority of councils took time to assimilate itself with those organs of authority that were natural to the Church. Often enough, the ecumenical councils were not squarely matching with the natural organs of authority.

If one were to run through the many ecumenical councils of the first millennium, including those self-styled as "ecumenical" but never listed as such thereafter, not a single one of them neatly fits a standardized

[30] Some Orthodox have seen the requirement of papal ratification to be only slightly more important than the need to have the ratification of all the other bishops, particularly the other four patriarchs. However, as we will see, the ratifying authority of the pope was classed in itself as something altogether unique to the enforcement of councils. He was not just another equal in a series of other necessary equals, as sometimes put.

[31] Peri, "Role of the Bishop of Rome," in *The Petrine Ministry*, ed. Kasper, 145.

criterion.[32] Nicaea (325) was contested by a great number of bishops, and subsequent synods sought to nullify it, as we saw. The second council held in Constantinople (381) was a regional Eastern council with no participation of Western bishops, and its canons were not universally held even in the East, much less the West, for sixty years after it was held. The Council of Ephesus (431) was rejected by Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, and the Christian communities he influenced, which ended up moving Eastward into Persia. The Council of Ephesus II (449) was duly confirmed by Emperor Theodosius II, and without "Pope Leo the Great," this Robber Council "would have obtained in the East undoubted authority."[33] The "Synod of the Oaks," which condemned St. John Chrysostom, was "crowned with success" and immediate reception in the East.[34] When Justinian I convened the fifth council held in Constantinople (553), the council thought itself capable of processing ecumenical canons and decrees without the authority of Pope Vigilius or the Western churches. When the council closed, the Western bishops rejected it despite the pope's ratification of it. The Council of Hieria (754), which condemned the veneration of images of our Lord and the saints, was duly convened by the emperor and accepted in Constantinople, and yet the Council of Nicaea II (787), which sought to condemn iconoclasm, struggled in that its representation of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem were open to question.[35] On top of that, the Frankish bishops questioned the legitimacy of the Council of Nicaea (787) due to a poor translation, and even the Studite monks could call its status into question because Pope Hadrian I never gave full recognition of it as an ecumenical council.[36] Iconoclasm was resurrected just some forty or so years after the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and was only put down successfully once and for all by the secular arm under the new leadership of Empress Theodora in 843.[37] And this is merely scratching the surface of the chaotic history that comprised the era of ecumenical councils. This does not even mention the self-styled ecumenical councils, which are too many to discuss at length.

[32] My summary draws from the review of the Seven Ecumenical Councils in Joseph Hergenröther's *Anti-Janus: An Historico-Theological Criticism of the Work, Entitled "The Pope and the Council," by Janus*, trans. J. B. Robertson, Esq. (London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1870), 187–92.

[33] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 189.

[34] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 189.

[35] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 191.

[36] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 190.

[37] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 190.

What rule or standard are we to use to judge which ones are written in stone by the finger of God? Many said those which have the character of universal consent. That usually would prove enough, but it must be pointed out that not a single one of the first seven councils has that characteristic, at least if by "universal" we mean a mathematical quantity or formal stature. Some might say those seven stand out and were accepted because they spoke the truth of patristic tradition.[38] The Nestorian churches, as well as the Coptic and Syriac Christians of the East, would make a fuss over the doctrinal correctness of the Third to Fifth Councils, let alone the rest. And now we are at another contest.

Of those which the Orthodox Church today receive as ecumenical, clergyman of the East thought that the Apostolic See would have the authority to undo their decrees for at least two of them. After the Council of Ephesus, certain metropolitans of the East wrote to Pope Sixtus III in order to obtain a review of what transpired.[39] After the Council of Chalcedon (451), Emperor Leo sought St. Leo to consider holding another council, presuming the insufficiency of Chalcedon on behalf of dissenters in Egypt and elsewhere. Presumably, the bishops understood that these councils of themselves were not the last word on ecclesiastical matters. What was the last word?

Many voices began to return to the foundational theory, already given its basic treatment in the writings of St. Cyprian, of what keeps the visible Church together in a unity. That is, they returned to the Petrine principle of Church unity and focused in on the unifying function of the See of Peter. As such, the successor of St. Peter had the power to judge the finality of councils and hear the appeals of all bishops who felt they were wrongly condemned by their own synods. The Council of Sardica (343), which is esteemed at an ecumenical level by Orthodox unto this very day through the canons of Trullo (692), permitted all bishops to appeal to Rome as the final court of appeal. Eastern bishops made use of this appellate model even to have ecumenical councils reviewed. Case in point would be St. Flavian, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who

[38] See Fr. Richard Price's Zernov lecture, "East and West at the Ecumenical Councils," whose transcript is available at *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/36337866/East_and_West_at_the_Ecumenical_Councils. Price even downplays the significance of papal participation and universality at the Seven Ecumenical Councils, seeing that the truth of the council's transmission of Sacred Tradition was more important in determining its ecumenicity.

[39] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 189.

appealed Ephesus II (449)[40] to Pope St. Leo, and "in their letters explicitly recognized his 'apostolic authority' to do so as Peter's successor."[41]

And so, in the midst of learning how the hoped-for resolution of councils could turn into a council vs. council fight in the mode of private judgment, the Church brought the Petrine principle to the fore as a way to break the crystallization of ongoing schism and dispute over doctrine or discipline. By the mid-fifth century, the Western emperor Valentinian III understood this principle and saw how it was traditional for the maintenance of unity for Western provinces. In an imperial edict issued in 445 over an episcopal dispute in the West,[42] Valentinian ensured that the churches of Gaul should submit to the judgment of St. Peter in the Roman pontiff. The edict states:

> It is certain that for us and our Empire the only defence is in the favour of the God of heaven; and to deserve it our first care is to support the Christian faith and its venerable religion. Inasmuch then as the primacy of the Apostolic See is assured by the *merit of St. Peter, prince of the episcopal order*, by the *rank of the city of Rome*, and also by the *authority of a sacred synod*, lest presumption endeavor to attempt any unauthorized act contrary to the *authority of that See*, then at length will the peace of the Churches be everywhere maintained, *if the whole body acknowledged its ruler*. . . . We decree by this perpetual edict that it shall not be lawful for the bishops of Gaul or of the other provinces, contrary to ancient custom, to do aught without the authority of the venerable Pope of the Eternal City [Rome]; and whatsoever the authority of the Apostolic See has enacted, or may hereafter enact, shall be the law for all.[43]

---

[40] For many contemporary bishops, this council had all the signs of an ecumenical council, from its opening to its close. The emperor convened it, and it looked to have enjoyed the agreement of the majority. Whatever defect it may have had, it did not stand alone in this regard when looked at side-by-side with other councils.

[41] Brian E. Daley, S.J., "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches," in *Church Unity & The Papal Office*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 47.

[42] Bronwen Neil, *Leo the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 45–46.

[43] *Constitutio Valentinian III*, in Epistle XI, by Leo, *PL* 54.636–40, in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating of the History of the Church, AD 337–461*, ed. J. Stevenson, rev. W. H. C. Frend (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966), 303–04 (emphasis added). That Valentinian also understand that the Petrine principle applied to both East and West is made

The emperor saw the divisions that were caused by a disagreement between bishops, and saw that the Petrine principle of unity by way of authority would resolve the divisions. Peace, he writes, will be achieved by adhering to the Church's principle of unity, who is, as St. Cyprian taught, the Apostle Peter, and, as others drew further, his successor. This Petrinological theme would be used on all levels of Church jurisdiction and would eventually be used by the saints to norm the authority of ecumenical councils. In the local (bishop to diocese), provincial (metropolitan to bishops), regional (patriarch to metropolitans), and universal (pope to patriarchs and ecumenical councils), the Petrine protocol would set the standard for unity. Pope St. Leo the Great stated this in the clearest terms, showing how basic the Cyprianic Petrinology was, but, contra St. Cyprian, logically applying it above the local church to the universal relationship of all churches to St. Peter's historical throne in Rome. He wrote:

> The connection of the whole *body* makes all alike healthy, all alike beautiful: and this connection requires the *unanimity indeed of the whole body*, but it especially demands *harmony*

clear in his epistle to Emperor Theodosius II concerning the need to heed the appeals of the deposed Eastern bishops, such as Flavian of Constantinople. He writes: "We must, in our time, too, keep unchanged the honour of reverence that we owe to the blessed Apostle Peter, inasmuch as that the most blessed Bishop of the Roman city, to whom ancient use has given the primacy of the priesthood over all, must have occasion and power to judge in cases of faith and in the affairs of bishops. . . . Because of this the Bishop of Constantinople [Flavian], according to solemn use and according to the custom of a Council, has appealed to him by letter;" see *Ad Theodosium*, Epistle 55, in Leo's *Epistolary*, *PL* 54.859; English translation by Adrian Fortescue in *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, second ed. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1908), 71. See also Adrian Fortescue, *The Early Papacy: To the Synod of Chalcedon in 451*, fourth ed., ed. Alcuin Reid (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 100. Lastly, notice the order in which Emperor Valentinian gives the preeminence to Rome. In the first place, it is by the "merit" of St. Peter. The idea here is that the honor and privilege given to St. Peter, perhaps in view of his confession of faith or glorious martyrdom, by the Lord Jesus redounds to the Bishop of Rome. This could mean something different than what Catholics understand to be the investiture of primacy in the Gospel (Matt 16) since "merit" seems to harken to earned privileges. Secondly, that St. Peter is the "prince of the Episcopal order," which means that in the episcopal government of the Church, St. Peter is the head of all. Lastly, it is the "rank of the city of Rome." This last one may be relegated to a purely secular contribution of the Roman city, which played a tremendous role in the wider metropolitanate jurisdiction of the West, if not universally. This third layer of preeminence is most likely what the See of Constantinople thought to draw from in giving the Greek city Byzantium the title "New Rome." If Old Rome was preeminent due to the city's secular rank, then certainly the newly glorified city of Byzantium, turned Constantinople, should enjoy the very same elevation for a large regional jurisdiction over Eastern territory.

> *among the priests.* And though they have a common dignity, yet they have not uniform rank; inasmuch as even among the blessed Apostles, notwithstanding the similarity of their honourable estate, there was a *certain distinction of power [discretio potestatis]*, and while the election of them all was equal, yet it was given to one to take the lead of the rest. From which model has arisen a distinction between bishops also, and by an important ordinance it has been provided that every one should not claim everything for himself: but that there should be in each province one whose opinion should have the priority among the brethren: and again that certain whose appointment is in the greater cities should undertake a fuller responsibility, *through whom the care of the universal Church should converge towards Peter's one seat, and nothing anywhere should be separated from its Head.*[44]

The universal headship of the bishop of Rome is here given apostolic foundations in St. Peter, and the universal Church had its governmental apex in the bishop of Rome as the head of all the churches. Already from the fifth century, we see a trend building up which consists of the will of the pope versus the will of the Roman emperor regarding the validity of councils. From an imperial point of view, the fourth century is a horrible showcase for the definitive role of the emperors. Ironically, "Nicaea was called to settle the Arian controversy, but the controversy was just as bitter, and far more widespread, by the end of Constantine's reign in 337 than it had been in 325. Constantine's successors were no more successful than he in winning compliance for their councils."[45]

The use of force and threats of punishment being employed by them, the emperors were still not successful in bringing the state-Church into a whole unity. This method is called by Professor Paul Valliere "political determinism."[46] By a miracle of God, the truth was carried through the most unpredictable and unsystematic means between the Nicene Council and the later part of the fourth century, and many of the "ecumenical"

---

[44] Leo, Letter 14, §12, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604014.htm (emphasis added).

[45] Paul Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 78.

[46] Valliere, *Conciliarism*, 80.

councils convened by the emperors, but which denied the dogma of Nicaea, were rejected by the bishop of Rome. Pope St. Damasus (366–384), for example, claimed that the heretical councils were to be ignored, in part, because neither Rome nor any of her legates were involved or gave approval to them. In any case, the era of ecumenical councils shows that the pre-Nicene Church was not immediately equipped to handle the policy of such councils, and the period up to the ninth century served as a testing ground for what organs of authority the Church would ultimately depend on. The principles of apostolic succession, Scripture, and Tradition, and the primacies of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch were all there from the ancient times, but in the new Constantinian revolution, as it is called, ancient principles would be called to form a new consolidated method by which to adjudicate issues in the newly found context of Christendom.

## St. Athanasius and the Council of Sardica (343)[47]

One wishes that the Council of Nicaea would have put a complete end to the contagion originating with Arius. But it was shortly afterward that bishops who had opposed Nicaea, and were thereby exiled, returned in peace. This was largely due to the minds of many growing flexible to alternative explanations of the Son's relationship with God the Father.[48] It was around this time that semi-Arian bishops, circled around the famous Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia (339–341), were able to get Constantine to convene a synod in Tyre in 335, where St. Athanasius, who had been the bishop of Alexandria since 328, was deposed and replaced with a certain Pistus. The charges brought against Athanasius were for certain violations of the sacred order of the Church. His accusers had said he broke a "consecrated chalice, and the holy table itself, and had thrown the sacred books into the fire," and that he murdered a man named Arsenius.[49] Later,

[47] I draw largely from Fr. John Chapman's wonderful chapter on "St. Athanasius and Pope Julius I" in *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), 51–71.

[48] It is amazing how quickly the bishops thought they could revise the Nicene dogma and were ready to rehabilitate Arius himself, probably recanting to something of a middle position from where he was in 325. The semi-Arian bishops of the East that we will be describing here were not full-blown Arians, and in many ways, they still respected the Nicene Council, but eventually they were open to expanding or even revising the term *homoousios*. Instead of something so glaring and demanding as "same substance," they opted for *homoiousios*, i.e., "like the Father" in all things.

[49] John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century: Their Doctrine, Temper, and Conduct,*

additional charges were brought against him which were also ecclesial or political in nature.[50]

The Eusebian bishops wrote an epistle explaining the condemnation of St. Athanasius to present before Pope St. Julius I (337–352) through legates. In turn, the pope wrote to St. Athanasius informing him of the communication. St. Athanasius then sent a refutation through his own legates. When the messengers from the Eusebians, still present at Rome, were confronted by the legates from Athanasius, they resorted to leaving the dispute for a council to settle. The pope then summoned St. Athanasius and his accusers in the East to come to Rome for a fresh examination from each party involved. This summons of the pope was unique in that neither St. Athanasius nor the Eusebians had appealed for such a council in Rome even if the legates sent by the Eusebians had been the first to suggest the option. St. Athanasius, according to the pope's letter to the Eusebian bishops, came to Rome "not of his own accord, but he was summoned by letter from us, in the manner in which we wrote to you."[51] Notice St. Julius summons the Eusebians *in the same manner.* The Greek historian Theodoret (450) described this event:

> The friends of Eusebius had sent false accusations against him [Athanasius] to Julius, who was then bishop of Rome. In obedience to the *laws* of the church, *Julius summoned the accusers and the accused to Rome,* that the cause might be tried. Athanasius, accordingly, set out for Rome, but the calumniators refused to go because they saw that their falsehood would easily be detected.[52]

As Theodoret says, the Eusebian bishops did obey the summons. Such a move manifests a "primacy of jurisdiction"[53] for the See of Rome, an

*Chiefly as Exhibited in the Councils of the Church between A.D. 325 & A.D. 381* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1833), 86.

[50] Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century,* 86.

[51] Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 1.29, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/28081.htm.

[52] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 3, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/27022.htm (emphasis added).

[53] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting

authority heeded by St. Athanasius, champion of Nicene orthodoxy in the East. Something by this year (340) made it entirely appropriate to refer to a Roman summons to Eastern bishops as sanctioned by, as Theodoret says, the "laws" of the Church. Pope St. Julius will give a testimony which explains it in full, but historically, we have the Dionysius event recorded by St. Athanasius in the previous section; we have the intervention of Pope St. Stephen in North Africa and Asia; we have Pope St. Callistus I and his edict to North Africa (i.e., for which Tertullian called him "Pontifex Maximus"); and we have the jurisdictional motion of Pope St. Victor against the Asiatic Churches. Under this pontificate of St. Julius, we will get additional reasons as for why Rome occupied this role. Turning his attention to St. Athanasius, we will see something foundational that would set the tone for all future relations between the papacy and the East.

Upon his arrival in Rome, St. Athanasius was accompanied by other deposed clerics from the East,[54] including Bishop Paul of Constantinople, who was driven out of his bishopric to make room for Eusebius. The historian Sozomen (450) describes the response of Pope Julius:

> On learning the accusation against each individual, and on finding that they held the same sentiments about the Nicæan dogmas, *admitted them to communion* as of like orthodoxy; and as *the care for all was fitting to the dignity of his see, he restored them all to their own churches.* He wrote to the bishops of the East, and *rebuked them* for having judged these bishops unjustly, and for harassing the Churches by abandoning the Nicæan doctrines.[55]

As clear as day, there is here posited a "dignity" to the Roman See by which it "cares for all," in particular, in the context of an episcopal trial and the overturning or reaffirming of the sentence. That sort of "care"

---

Christian Knowledge, 1944), 213. Jalland reads Pope Julius's letter to the Eusebians as indicating his judgment on the case of St. Athanasius would be "superfluous" (Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 213n6.

[54] Marcellus of Ancyra, Asclepas of Gaza, and Lucius of Adrianople. Chapman also says that bishops from Thrace, Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine had taken refuge as well (Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 56).

[55] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.8, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Chester D. Hartranft (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26023.htm (emphasis added).

involves jurisdiction. The Eusebians did respond in an epistle filled with complaints of the pope's overturning of the decrees of the Eastern Council held in Tyre (335), which had condemned Athanasius. They "called Julius to account for having admitted the followers of Athanasius into communion, and expressed their indignation against him for having insulted their synod and *abrogated their decrees*, and they assailed his transactions as unjust and *discordant with ecclesiastical right*."[56] The Eusebian bishops were not open to Rome being an appellate court, capable of overturning the sentences of prior councils. In his response letter, the pope accuses the Eusebian bishops not merely of being wrong in their dispute with Athanasius but also of the procedures which they took in deposing and replacing bishops of churches wherein, at one time, the "Apostles themselves had governed in their own persons."[57] They were, according to the pope, not abiding by the laws and orders of ecclesiastical canon. The pope wrote:

> Supposing, as you assert, that some offense rested upon those persons, the case ought to have been conducted against them, not after this manner, but according to the *canon of the Church*. Word should have been written of it *to us all*, that so *a just sentence might proceed from all*. . . . And why was nothing said to us concerning the Church of the Alexandrians in particular? Are you ignorant that the custom has been for word to be written first *to us*, and then for a just decision to be passed from *this place*? If then any such suspicion rested upon the Bishop there, notice thereof ought to have been sent to the Church of this place; whereas, after neglecting to inform us, and proceeding on their own authority as they pleased, now they desire to obtain our concurrence in their decisions, though we never condemned him. Not so have the *constitutions of Paul*, not so have the *traditions of the Fathers* directed; this is another form of procedure, a novel practice. I beseech you, readily bear with me: what I write is for the common good. *For what we have received from the blessed Apostle Peter, that I signify to you*.[58]

[56] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.8, *New Advent* (emphasis added).
[57] Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 1.35, *New Advent* (emphasis added).
[58] Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 1.35, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

It can be seen from this that the pope's primary complaint is their form of procedure. Before passing sentence on St. Athanasius and the other bishops of apostolic churches, they were supposed to have written to "all," so that a just judgment might *proceed from all.* And this, according to the *canon* of the Church. It is difficult to interpret precisely what St. Julius has in mind here, but at the very least, he understands that the universal Church, between West and East, has rules by which all the churches are to be governed, and that these are derived from the tradition of Sts. Peter and Paul held in Rome. St. Julius, here, is insistent that the Easterners did not follow proper protocol.

Does he mean that before a regional synod passes a sentence against bishops, it must first write to obtain the approval of every bishop in the known world? Such a postal burden would itself be unthinkable and unprecedented. It seems clear enough that St. Julius, at least in some sense, sees the need for the wider episcopate to be notified before a sentence is put into *final effect*, particularly upon the sees which were senior or apostolic in origin.[59] For many interpreters, St. Julius is taking the more traditional practice of episcopal consensus and opposing it with the "novel practice" of the Eusebian party which sought to make regional and imperially sanctioned councils as irreversible in themselves (i.e., impervious to annulment). Is there, then, no place in Julius's mind for a unique position of the Roman bishop in all of this? After all, if *all* must be notified, that would include the bishop of Rome.

More questions are raised about this peculiar response on the part of the pope. What occasions had there been when an episcopal accusation required the review of all bishops before passing sentence?[60] One might say that Nicaea (325), Arles (314), and Rome (313) were examples of notice being brought to a greater number of bishops, but certainly not all. There are examples of synods being held to reach a universal consensus, such as in the case of the date of Easter, and these synods were called by Pope Victor.[61] There is the situation we mentioned above where St. Cyprian reached out to Pope St. Stephen for him to effect, by letter, the excommunication and replacement of the bishop of Arles. But

[59] When describing the accused, he writes: "For the sufferers were Bishops, and Churches of no ordinary note, *but those which the Apostles themselves had governed in their own persons*" (Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 1.35, *New Advent*; emphasis added).

[60] In fact, the Eusebian party was correct in pointing to the fact that when the Western episcopate was condemned, he was thought to have been justly and sufficiently condemned without notifying the East. See Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.8, *New Advent.*

[61] We know from the letter of St. Polycrates of Ephesus that the bishops of Asia Minor met in Ephesus at Pope St. Victor's request.

this was a communication between Gaul, Carthage, and Rome, as far as we know. So while there is no precedent for every single bishop of the known world being required to co-judge on the matter of episcopal depositions, there is precedent for cooperation between synods in East and West, generally speaking, achieving some sort of unanimity or consensus.

What raises even more questions is that, on one hand, St. Julius seems to say all bishops should be notified in the case of episcopal depositions, yet on the other hand, he appears to be satisfied with the church of Alexandria being judged by Rome alone. He literally states that, in general, a just decision must "proceed from all," and then when it comes to the great See of Alexandria, only "from this place" (i.e., Rome). Why and how the exception for Alexandria? Wouldn't an episcopal deposition requiring consensus be contradicted by Rome judging Alexandria alone? To make matters even more confusing, the church of Alexandria was known to be the preeminent see of the East, just after Rome in the order of sees. It would, therefore, seem that the Alexandrian church, above all others besides Rome, would require the consultation of all bishops, per the principle acclaimed by St. Julius. We will return to these questions as we proceed with the history which followed.

One other observation that deserves attention is the fact that, by the pope's perspective, the deposed Eastern bishops were given the option to have their case reviewed by a court in Rome. The Greek historians Sozomen (445) and Socrates Scholasticus (440), writing a century later in Constantinople, produced two histories of the Church. Both give a detailed record of the Arian crisis. When it came to describing this part of the Eastern bishops making sentences against Athanasius (and others), they add some interesting details. Concerning one council held in Antioch, which reiterated the proceedings at the Council of Tyre, Socrates discredits it by saying:

> Neither was Julius, Bishop of the great Rome, there, nor had he sent a substitute, although an ecclesiastical canon commands that the churches shall not make any ordinances against the opinion of the bishop of Rome.[62]

[62] Socrates Scholasticus, *Church History* 2.8, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. A. C. Zenos (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26012.htm.

About the famous letter of the pope to the Eusebians, he writes that the pope accused them of "a violation of the canons, because they had not requested his attendance at the council, *seeing that the ecclesiastical law required that the churches should pass no decisions contrary to the views of the bishop of Rome.*"[63] Sozomen, describing the same response of the pope, says St. Julius accused the Easterners of "innovations contrary to the dogmas of the Nicene council, and of having violated the laws of the Church, by neglecting to invite him to join their synod; *for he alleged that there is a sacerdotal canon which declares that whatever is enacted contrary to the judgment of the bishop of Rome is null.*"[64] Keep in mind, these historians were also lawyers who understood the basics of the Roman legal system. It is astonishing that they would recount these events as they did, since the letter of Pope St. Julius to the Eusebians, as we saw, does not quite come out this explicitly concerning the unique prerogatives of the bishop of Rome. But how could Greek historians living in Constantinople have a motive to artificially enhance Roman primacy? What would have stirred both[65] to comment in this manner? Could it really be that they were filled with a desire to aggrandize the bishop of Rome? Nothing in their writings supports this. The best explanation is that this is how they interpreted the papal letter *in summation.* The pope emphasized the need for "all" to be consulted, but he really implied that the preeminent requirement was that Rome to be consulted.

In the aftermath of the pope's restoration of the deposed bishops, terrible backlash came from the East. As described by Fr. John Chapman, when Paul of Constantinople, one of the restored clerics, returned to the imperial city, he was not received, and he suffered greatly from riots. With East and West being at odds, it was time for a general council to happen, one like Nicaea. Ossius, the same bishop who presided over Nicaea, took steps to have the emperors summon the bishops to meet in Sardica (Sofia in modern Bulgaria) in order to address the matters of contention, particularly with regard to the rehabilitation of St. Athanasius. St. Julius sent two legates, and the council was, not surprisingly, presided over by Ossius. The Eastern bishops made the travel, but when they found out that St. Athanasius was initially going to be accepted as a

[63] Socrates, *Church History* 2.17, *New Advent.*

[64] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.10, *New Advent.*

[65] It is generally held that Sozomen had used the completed version of Socrates Scholasticus's *History* as a guide for his own production. See Theresa Urbainczyk, "Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 46.3 (3rd Qtr., 1997), 355–73, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4436476.

bishop in good standing, they withdrew themselves and met in a council in a separate location (Philippopolis), rehearsing their condemnations of St. Athanasius and other Eastern clerics. Without surprise, they added Pope St. Julius and Ossius to the list of condemned bishops. They condemned the pope as the "*chief and leader of the wicked.*"[66]

Meanwhile, the orthodox bishops who met at Sardica[67] successfully justified the actions of the pope in restoring St. Athanasius, and they also passed some canons concerning ecclesiastical discipline. Those of relevance are the ones which legislate that the bishop of Rome can open the case of condemned bishops from anywhere in the world for a retrial.

Some background is required to understand these canons. The very cause of the whole fiasco between East and West on this occasion was the enactments of Eastern synods against certain Eastern bishops, particularly St. Athanasius. These bishops were removed from their offices through deposition and replaced with other men. However, there were both supporters and protesters against these actions. The condemned bishops certainly felt an injustice was done. But the Church at this time did not really have a codified *legal structure*[68] by which to revise the decisions reached by the court of a regional synod.[69] As was made clear to Pope

[66] The Eusebians, Letter from Philippopolis, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 99.

[67] In a rather strange case of inconsistency, Athanasius in one place says that the council had three hundred bishops (see *Apologia Contra Arianos* 1.1, *New Advent*) and in another place 170; see Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 3.15, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/28153.htm. What is interesting, however, is that from the letter of the Council of Sardica to Alexandria, we learn that, besides the papal legates representing Rome, there were bishops from Spain, Gaul, Italy, Campania, Calabria, Apulia, Africa, Sardinia, Pannonia, Mysia, Dacia, Noricum, Siscia, Dardania, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, Epirus, Thrace, Rhodope, Palestine, Arabia, Crete, Egypt, and a second Dacia (see Letter of Sardica to Alexandria, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 103). Modern scholarship tends to see, of the 170 bishops originally prepared to meet, ninety were present and active in the council after the Eastern bishops who were against Athanasius had left.

[68] The Church was governed by local churches, many of which were headed by a metropolitan and the synodal model of government. Despite this, as we've seen, the church of Rome was recognized as having a special responsibility in the unity and administration of all the churches. This traditional Roman primacy would have to factor into a new legal structure, and that is what we see happening at Sardica.

[69] Or, in addition, the bishops "belonging to a neighbouring province" who could confirm the decisions of a synod; see Synod of Antioch in Encaeniis (A.D. 341), "Canon 14," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3805.htm.

St. Julius, the Eusebian bishops accused him of disregarding the supreme verdict of their synod held in Tyre (335). That sentence was not to be annulled, nor was the case to be reopened. The Eusebian assumption, therefore, is synodal supremacy of a particular region, and no one from the outside can tap in and revise that. For the bishop of Rome to bypass the authority of their synod appeared to them as a usurpation of foreign jurisdiction. According to Klaus Schatz, the result of this mentality was the devolution of every church as "autonomous or autocephalous."[70] This regional and conciliar independence was prone to solidify schisms, and the pope of the First See knew that.

Because this institutional model of regional supremacy proved to be both insufficient and contrary to the rules of the Church by the pope, the Council of Sardica set out to legislate certain canons which allowed for the judgment and penal sentences of synods anywhere in the world to be return to open status, and even possibly reversed, by an appeal to the position of St. Peter's successor in the Roman bishopric. The council decreed that if a bishop felt his case was judged improperly by his synod, he could take steps to having his case reopened by the power (*potestas*) and authority (*auctoritas*)[71] of the Roman bishop, justifying this on

[70] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 23.

[71] Many scholars have understood *auctoritas* to mean a certain kind of moral influence based on some distinguishing characteristics but to be strongly contrasted with juridical power that can implement and execute law or discipline. I take a different interpretation in that *auctoritas* became a certain basis for jurisdictional authority; see Hamilton Hess, *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Sardica* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 186–88, and see in particular n603. In classical Roman terminology, *auctoritas* marked people out "by virtue of their wisdom, their position, their natural force of character, their achievements, their family tradition, or some combination of these," and people having it "were expected to give a lead which others should follow" (Frank Ezra Adcock, *Roman Political Ideas and Practice* [Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972], 14). *Auctoritas* described the sort of virtue and wisdom held by the council of the Roman senate that would compel the imperial magistrates to follow the way that would make for a successful state. When the emperor, as the *princeps*, would claim *auctoritas* for himself, there is a sense in which that was to be more desired than legal *potestas* (power); see Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1939), 322. When the term *auctoritas* began to describe the authority of the Apostolic See of Rome, it becomes a stronger form of authority which people had to submit to as the wisdom of the Roman senate, but transformed into a real binding authority. For the *auctoritas* of the Roman See was rooted in the supernatural activity of St. Peter, the rock and key-bearer of the Church, acting in his heirs. As such, such *auctoritas* was undeniable. For example, when the North Africans sought the judgment of Pope St. Innocent I (401–417) on the case of the heretics Pelagius and Celestius, they wrote that the heretics "will more easily yield to the authority of your Holiness, which has been taken from the authority of the Holy Scriptures (*auctoritati sanctitatis tuae, de sanctarum*

the ground of "*honoring the memory of Peter the Apostle.*" According to Christopher W. B. Stephens, the Council of Sardica issued canons which "*retrospectively sanctioned* special rights of Rome as the Holy See of

*scripturarum auctoritate depromptae facilius . . . esse cessuros*);" see Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 142.

The *auctoritas* of Holy Scripture entails its virtue to lead souls to God, but it can hardly be defined as something optional for confessing Christians. Similarly, the "*auctoritati*" of the Apostolic See, drawn from the "*auctoritate*" of the Holy Scriptures, would carry over the same kind of attribute. The papal decretals, which often included binding threats of discipline for non-conformance, were described as carrying "*auctoritas apostolicae sedis*," and thus the terminology could be seen as having unchallengeable authority comparable to contemporary imperial decrees or conciliar canons; see Detlev Jasper and Horst Fuhrmann, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 15–16. One telling example is the usage of *auctoritas* by St. Hilary of Poitiers, who claimed that the power of the keys to bind and loose were an exercise of *auctoritas*; see Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 291n27. It is therefore no stretch of the historical limit when Cambridge medievalist Walter Ullmann defines the *auctoritas* of the papacy, rooted in the "ancient Roman constitution," as entailing a "final and supreme and unchallengeable ruling in any controversial matter;" see Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 32; Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 10–11. For a brief scholarly survey on the variant ways of interpreting *auctoritas* as a term describing papal authority, see Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 2014), 21.

For readers who are more familiar with the classical Roman usage of *auctoritas* in terms of an unofficial influence which lacks legal authorization and command, I would point to the work of the late political philosopher and historian, Michael Oakeshott, who gives an extensive treatment of the origin and meaning of *auctoritas* versus *potestas*. In one place, Oakeshott states that no one "by virtue of having *auctoritas* could command, or make a law; what he could do was to think for himself, to give an opinion or an advice which must be listened to" (Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, eds. Terry Nardin and Luke O'Sullivan [Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2006], 196). However, he also understands a combination of *auctoritas* and *potestas* converged in one subject in Emperor Augustus of Rome (Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, 203). This may explain the usage of *auctoritas* to describe papal authority in the Middle Ages since the pope was likened to the emperor with the name of *princeps* (the first), which was the title of the Roman emperor. Oakeshott seems to also think that when it comes to the institution of the Church, the pope speaking with *auctoritas* requires more respect and recognition: "In virtue of his *auctoritas*, the pope was recognized to be the guardian, the custodian of Christian doctrine, and its sole authoritative interpreter. This 'authority' he was held to have derived from St. Peter. It might be used to settle, judicially, actual disputes about Christian belief; but it was something much larger and less defined than this" (Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, 274). As all linguists know, context is the chief determiner of meaning, and there is no doubt that *auctoritas* was used to describe very forceful modes of papal authority in the Middle Ages.

Peter."[72] Stephens acknowledges, however, that Pope St. Julius had already explicitly claimed these rights as his own beforehand.[73] These canons, as Fr. Luke Rivington wrote, "barred the possibility of independent national Churches."[74] No sector of the Church, in either East or West, could close in on itself and forbid appeals to a higher court, as the Eastern bishops were attempting.

For the first time in the historical record, the pope unmistakably claimed that he could "veto decisions in any part of the Church."[75] It is not as if the Eusebian bishops were straightforward novelists. They had grounds to prefer their version of the principle of subsidiary, but they did so to the exclusion of the principle of universal primacy. The simple fact of the matter is that pre-Nicene and immediately post-Nicene Christianity needed to reevaluate its system of due process in the case of Church discipline. The "inadequacy of the Nicene legislation . . . in its failure to prove an appeal from the judgment of a provincial synod"[76] was rectified by these new motions. Also, this was far from being a novelty. Rather, the council Fathers dug into the traditional Petrinological theme that was already given theoretical treatment in the pre-Nicene era as evidence from the foregoing. The clearest canon of the three which spoke to this new legislation is herein stated:

> But if judgment have gone against a bishop in any cause, and he think that he has a good case, in order that the question may be reopened, let us, if it be your pleasure, *honour the memory of St. Peter the Apostle*, and let those who tried the case write to Julius, the bishop of Rome, and if he shall judge that the case should be retried, let that be done, and let him appoint judges; but if he shall find that the case is of such a sort that the former decision need not be disturbed,

---

[72] Christopher W. B. Stephens, *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority: The Canons of Antioch and Serdica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 143. Stephens reports elsewhere that the association of the Roman bishop with St. Peter *grounded the power* envisioned in the Sardican canons; see 233 (emphasis added).

[73] Stephens, *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority*, 144.

[74] Fr. Luke Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), 181.

[75] Stephens, *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority*, 145. One might say this was implicit in Pope St. Victor's excommunication of the Asiatic churches, Pope St. Stephen's enforcement against the baptism policy of North Africa, and the penance practices of North Africa under Pope St. Callistus.

[76] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 220.

> what he has decreed shall be confirmed. Is this the pleasure of all? The synod answered, "It is our pleasure."[77]

The bishops felt that St. Peter's memory[78] should be honored. What could the memory of St. Peter contribute to the revision of synodal judgments of lower courts? Because the context is that of undoing (loosening) a binding judgment reached by the authority of a synod, the honor to be given to the memory of St. Peter would have to harken to the fact that it was to him and his successors that the keys of the kingdom were primordially given. Therefore, the Roman bishop, who inherits St. Peter's primacy and the position of key-holder, has the power to loosen the binding decisions that have been made by any ecclesiastical court in any church whatsoever. Therefore, the idea that Sardica was issuing a brand-new disciplinary program by granting to Rome a power and authority not already inherent in its being the See of Peter is not evident from the text nor the historical context. Further evidence of this is seen from the letter of the council to Pope St. Julius. They write:

> That which has been our constant belief hitherto, remains our present conviction; experience serves to prove and confirm, what each of us has only heard with our ears. . . . For it will seem *best and highly appropriate, if the Lord's bishops, each from his own province, report to the head, that is to the see of Peter the Apostle.*[79]

The bishops here understand realities which precede their meeting to have grounded the decision behind the canons. They did not create a new head for the universal Church. The Apostle Peter was the head of the original Apostles. You cannot get more rooted in the Church's foundations than that. It was what they "always believed." This "right of the Pope," says Bishop Charles Joseph Hefele (1809–1893), "to receive appeals

---

[77] Council of Sardica (A.D. 344), "Canon 3," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church: Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series, vol. 14, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry R. Percival (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 417 (emphasis added). Also available at *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3815.htm.

[78] Some might interpret this as the shrine of St. Peter's grave in Rome.

[79] Hilary, *Fragmenta Historica*, series B, II.2–4, in Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 222. Some scholars have contested the authenticity of this section of the letter; see Hess, *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Sardica*, 187n605. In his *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority*, Stephens defends authenticity; see 147.

was involved in the idea of the primacy as a divine institution, and had in fact been exercised before the Synod of Sardica, which only expressly defined and declared it."[80]

From all of this we can see that the initial insistence of Pope St. Julius was to have the Eusebian party write to "all" so that a "just judgment" might proceed from "all" could be interpreted. It is clear from his actions, as well as the Council of Sardica, that he had Rome specifically in mind when he urged the Eusebians to "write to all." Undoubtedly, this was picked up by the Greek historians mentioned. Unfortunately, the Eastern bishops who sided with the cause of Eusebius broke communion from the West, principally the bishop of Rome. The tragic schism lasted for several decades to come.

It was the semi-Arian view of Roman primacy that gets represented by the Eastern episcopate that rejected Sardica. Not only would they have thought that the foreign policy of the Roman See was "novel," they would also have said the same about the dogmatic decree of Nicaea (325). But, in fact, the orthodox bishops did not see this as novelty. The Sardican canons were merely an attempt to "establish a legal basis for Rome's responsibility to maintain communion among the bishops."[81] And that basis was found in the Petrine architecture with the See of Rome as the head of the whole episcopate. And even then, Rome never felt subservient to the limitations that a strict reading of the canons gave since the basis upon which Rome stood as primate was from Christ. As Duchesne aptly describes, "There is no evidence to show that in this matter it conformed to the procedure laid down at Sardica. Instead of confining itself to quashing the decisions and appointing new judges, *the Popes continued to decide the appeal itself.*"[82]

## Pope Liberius (352–366): The Papacy under Threat

St. Julius's successor, Liberius, became bishop of Rome only to meet a dreadful attempt on the part of Emperor Constantius II, one of the sons of Constantine himself, to bring the whole Western episcopate under Arian convictions. That meant, as well, to affirm the original

[80] Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils: From the Original Documents*, vol. 1, *To the Close of the Council of Nicaea A.D. 325*, trans. and ed. William R. Clark (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007; previously published by T&T Clark, 1894), 122.

[81] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 25.

[82] Louis Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church: From its Foundation to the End of the Fifth Century*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1922), 180 (emphasis added).

condemnation of Athanasius at Tyre (335), who had civil and ecclesial accusations against him as well. We see here what was only subtly seen under his father, the unwelcome signs of an emperor taking to himself the responsibility to defend Christianity *as he sees fit*. Nicene Orthodoxy, now facing an onslaught of opposition, would not enjoy triumphant status until Theodosius the Great (381).

In response to Constantius, who was sole emperor at this time, Liberius requested that he convene an ecumenical council in Italy in order to resolve the remaining disputes. This request was not granted, but Constantius was successful in gaining converts to his way of thinking in Arles (353) and Milan (355). Constantius sought to achieve a semi-Arian doctrine as well as the once-for-all condemnation and exile of St. Athanasius. To those bishops who exclaimed that submitting to the condemnation of Arius would be uncanonical on account of the absence of the accused, Constantius had an answer: "Whatever I will, be that esteemed a Canon; the 'Bishops' of Syria let me thus speak. Either then obey, or go into banishment."[83] There could not be a clearer statement endorsing Caesaropapism.

In the meantime, despite St. Athanasius's exoneration at the Council of Sardica, there were more incoming appeals to Rome filled with complaints about St. Athanasius all over again.[84] Consequently, Pope Liberius, says Jalland, summoned St. Athanasius to appear before judges sent by the former to Alexandria and even threatened St. Athanasius with excommunication if it he did not comply.[85] It would appear the issue here was primarily a disciplinary accusation once again. I mentioned above how he was falsely accused at Tyre for being involved in the destruction of a consecrated chalice and even murder. Some accused him of taxing the Egyptians for the sake of greed and other treacherous deeds.[86] His obvious defense of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father was a cause for exclusion when the semi-Arians rose to an effective majority. The pope would not condemn St. Athanasius without a fair trial. Unwilling to reject Nicaea and St. Athanasius, Liberius stood firm against the

[83] Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 4.33, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/28154.htm.

[84] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 224–25; J. T. Shotwell and L. R. Loomis, eds., *The See of Peter* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[85] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 225.

[86] J. W. C. Wand, *A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 161.

Arianizing emperor and was consequently exiled to Beroea, Thrace, to be watched over by the Arian bishop Demophilus.[87] A certain archdeacon in Rome named Felix was chosen to replace Liberius as bishop of Rome. At the same time, St. Athanasius was subsequently exiled again, and the See of Alexandria was back under the possession of Arians. In his *Historia Arianorum*, St. Athanasius described the fate of the bishop of Rome as the chief goal of the semi-Arians:

> Thus from the first they spared not even Liberius, Bishop of Rome, but extended their fury even to those parts; they respected not his bishopric, *because it was an Apostolical throne*; they felt no reverence for Rome, because she is the Metropolis of Romania; they remembered not that formerly in their letters they had spoken of her Bishops as Apostolical men. But confounding all things together, they at once forgot everything, and cared only to show their zeal in behalf of impiety. When they perceived that *he was an orthodox man and hated the Arian heresy*, and earnestly endeavoured to persuade all persons to renounce and withdraw from it, these impious men reasoned thus with themselves: "If we can persuade Liberius, *we shall soon prevail over all.*"[88]

After a couple years in exile (357), Liberius succumbed to agreeing with the imperial forces and gave way to St. Athanasius's condemnation. In addition, he signed an ambiguous creed as to the Son's relationship with the Father and certainly omitted any reference to their being of the "same substance." This statement "while not expressly denying the formula of Nicaea, deviated from and practically abandoned it."[89] It was a creed drawn up in Sirmium at some time prior, most likely in 351.[90]

---

[87] Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, 96.

[88] Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 5.35, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/28155.htm (emphasis added).

[89] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 26; see J. N. D. Kelly, "Papal Primacy," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 30–31.

[90] Scholars debate over what creed Liberius signed in 357. Hilary, Athanasius, and Jerome all seem to indicate that he subscribed to a heretical anti-Nicene formula, otherwise known as the Second Sirmium Creed, which is *outright, full-blown Arianism*, i.e., professing that Christ was a creature in time. This view doesn't have the best defenses, however. See Beresford Kidd, *A History of the Church to A.D. 461*, vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1992),

According to F. X. Funk, Liberius did add a "saving clause in which he declared excommunicate whosoever should refuse to acknowledge that the Father and the Son resemble each other in all, even in their essence."[91] Athanasius describes this event:

> But Liberius after he had been in banishment two years gave way, and from fear of threatened death subscribed. Yet even this only shows their violent conduct, *and the hatred of Liberius against the heresy, and his support of Athanasius,* so long as he was suffered to exercise a free choice. For that which men are forced by torture to do contrary to their first judgment, *ought not to be considered the willing deed of those who are in fear, but rather of their tormentors.*[92]

---

156–57. While Kidd notices the difficulties that come with saying Liberius signed the Second Sirmium Creed, he seems satisfied to carry the difficulties associated with it. I agree with Jalland, who believes that Liberius signed not the statement of the Western Bishops at Sirmium in 357, which Hilary referred to as the *Blasphemy*, but the "so-called 'Long' Sirmian creed . . . drawn up under the leadership of Basil of Ancyra in 351. This creed reproduced substantially the 'Dedication' creed of Antioch 341 . . . and was regarded as sufficiently orthodox by Hilary" (Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 229n5). Contemporary scholarship seems to lean more toward this 351 Creed as the one Liberius initially signed to get out of exile; see Richard Patrick Crosland Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 357–62. For the most damning view of Liberius, see Edward Denny, *Papalism: A Treatise on the Claims of the Papacy as Set Forth in the Encyclical Satis Cognitum* (London: Rivingtons, 1912), 384–90. The consequence of this is that Hilary, or his editor, erroneously reported Liberius's signature on the *Blasphemy* document. I don't see this as being a difficult mistake to make. One of the strongest reasons to deny that Liberius subscribed to the *Blasphemy* creed of 357 is that the former wrote in his letter to the Easterners his agreement with their statement of faith whereas the Creed of 357 was put together by Westerners; see Liberius, Letters in Exile, in *Fragmenta Historica*, Series B, VII.8, 10, 11, trans. Hilary, in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 583. Other scholars also take the position that Liberius signed the more semi-Arian creed of Basil of Ancyra (i.e., the "Dedication" creed of Antioch, 341); see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 95. S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 115; William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 42–43n108; Kenneth D. Whitehead, *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: The Early Church was the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 234–46; H. J. A. Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes: The Making, Unmaking, and Restoration of Catholic Tradition* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015), 12, 16–17.

[91] Franz Xaver Funk, *A Manual of Church History*, vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., Ltd., 1910), 140.

[92] Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 5.41, *New Advent*.

Is there any more detail on this creed that Liberius signed in order to be released from exile? Contemporary scholarship leans in the direction of it being the "Dedication" creed of the Council of Antioch (341), which basically produced the Creed of Sirmium (351), a semi-Arian Creed which did not deny that the Son of God was like the Father in all things, even pertaining to his essence. One year after this, he was asked to sign a second creed, while residing in Sirmium, which asserted that the Son of God was "of equal being" (ὁμοίας οὐσίας),[93] and was then allowed by Constantius to return to Rome by an official edict. During this time, he ran into an internal dissension over the fact that Felix was reigning as bishop of Rome when he returned, though the latter was given far less support. It is interesting to note that if the position taken here, namely, that Pope Liberius signed, both in 357 and 358, creeds which were deemed semi-Arian, but in accordance with the view that the Son is "like" the Father in all things, akin to the manner in which Basil of Ancyra taught, one can make a good case that both Sts. Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers, who otherwise thought Liberius signed a flagrantly heretical statement, thought this Basilian-formula was essentially orthodox.[94] But even if we were to go forth and say the first creed he signed was the second Sirmium Creed, that is, explicitly Arian, and that he erred in faith, the words of St. John Henry Newman are apropos:

> It is astonishing to me how any one can fancy that Liberius, in subscribing the Arian confession, promulgated it *ex Cathedra*, considering he was not his own master when he signed it, and it was not his drawing up. Who would say that it would be a judgment of the Queen's Bench, or a

[93] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 232. He notes that this was a "substitute for the famous Nicene term, in the belief that it expressed the same truth without being liable to the same objections." One should also keep in mind that the term *homoiousios* (used for "like the Father" in all things) was somewhat shown by Hilary of Poitiers to be acceptable on certain conditions; see Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Councils*, §72, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 9, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. E. W. Watson and L. Pullan (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1899), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3301.htm. See also the brief description by Mary T. Clark, R.S.C.J., in *Marius Victorinus: Theological Treatises on the Trinity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 23.

[94] See Athanasius, *De Synodis*, §41, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2817.htm; Hilary, *On the Councils*, §72, *New Advent*; Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, 90.

> judicial act of any kind, if ribbon-men in Ireland, seized on one of her Majesty's judges, hurried him into the wilds of Connemara, and there made him, under terror of his life, sign a document in the very teeth of an award which he had lately made in court in a question of property. Surely for an *ex Cathedra* decision of the Pope is required his formal initiation of it, his virtual authorship in its wording, and his utterance amid his court, with solemnities parallel to those of an Ecumenical Council. It is not a transaction that can be done in his travelling dress, in some road-side inn, or town-tavern, or imperial servant's-hall. Liberius's subscription can only claim a Nag's Head's sort of infallibility.[95]

Matters did get worse. In 359, Constantius ordered an ecumenical council in Rimini, which had about four hundred bishops, each of whom had initially confessed explicit adherence to the Council of Nicaea, but eventually, as a result of imperial threats, succumbed to an Arianized doctrine. In response to this, Liberius published a statement which *annulled the decrees of Rimini* and further made it absolutely clear that communion with the Roman See would depend on perfect subscription to the Nicene Creed, and ended his life well. But it is not clear that he understood himself to have ever become a heretic. How could he not have publicly recanted before annulling the Council of Rimini mentioned above, if he had just given himself over to years of defending the Arian doctrine? Wouldn't some preface of his conversion be called for to spare himself from the obvious embarrassment? There is also, to my knowledge, no record of his annulling his former exclusion of St. Athanasius from Roman communion. That has led historians to question the authenticity of the letters collected which show him formally excommunicating St. Athanasius.[96] Surprisingly, Liberius is venerated as a saint in both the Eastern Orthodox (Aug 27) and Coptic Orthodox churches (Nasie 4), and St. Athanasius is particularly cherished by the latter. If the Orthodox or the Copt would insist on leaving Liberius as an impenitent Arian until his dying breath, that would certainly not look good. His supposed lapse from orthodoxy is supported by the statements of Athanasius, Hilary,

[95] John Henry Newman, *Historical Sketches*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), 340.

[96] John Chapman, s.v., "Pope Liberius," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), retrieved November 9, 2020, *New Advent*, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09217a.htm.

and Jerome, but the history surrounding his exile in Thrace and what he did in Sirmium are unclear enough for Rufinus (345–411), the historian, to claim absolute ignorance.[97] St. Basil of Caesarea, well after the death of Pope Liberius, refers to him as "blessed Liberius."[98] St. Ambrose refers to him as "of blessed memory."[99] Pope St. Siricius refers to him as "my predecessor of venerable memory."[100] In any case, it should be understood that when Liberius was free and safe to produce doctrinal statements of his own making, they were all thoroughly orthodox. Therefore, his career is likely not the best control test for whether the papacy, as Catholics understand it, reached a systemic failure in the "lapse" of Liberius.

## Pope St. Damasus I (366–384): St. Peter at the Helm

It is with the pontificate of St. Damasus that we see far more documentary evidence for the papal primacy emerging in history. As we saw above, Pope Liberius had annulled the decrees of the Council of Rimini (359). St. Damasus comments on Rimini in a Roman synod held in 370:

> Nor can any weight be attached to the size of the assemblage at *Rimini*, inasmuch as it is well known that neither the Roman Bishop, *whose judgment should have been asked first of all*, nor Vincent, who had served unstained as priest for so many years, nor any others of like standing.[101]

This Vincent was papal legate at the Council of Nicaea,[102] and it is probably to this functional capacity that Damasus makes reference here.

---

[97] Rufinus of Aquileia, *History of the Church* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 420.

[98] Basil, Letter 263, §3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 8, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202263.htm.

[99] Ambrose, *Concerning Virginity* 3.1, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 10, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H.T.F. Duckworth (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34073.htm.

[100] Siricius, "Epistolae," I, in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 699.

[101] Roman Synod (370), Letter to the Eastern Bishops, printed under Damasus, "Epistolae," I, in *Patrologia Latina* XIII, ed. J. P. Migne (Apud Garnier Fratres, 1845), 347–49; quoted in *See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 635–36.

[102] Shotwell and Loomis, eds., *The See of Peter*, 536. Vincent signed the decrees of the Council of Sardica as Bishop of Capua, and was used by that council to deliver their conciliar letter to

Those who would be of "like standing" would presumably be the patriarch of Alexandria, St. Athanasius, and then that of Antioch following. This further shows that, for Rome, the procedure of councils requires ultimate ratification, before all others, by Rome's bishop. In response to the council held in Constantinople (381),[103] which decreed that the church of Constantinople should be ranked just after the bishop of Rome, since Constantinople had become "New Rome," St. Damasus had decreed at a Roman synod in 382 that Rome's universal primacy was on the "basis not of synodical decisions but directly on the promise of Christ to Peter."[104] He stated:[105]

> Though all the catholic churches diffused throughout the world are but one bridal chamber of Christ, *yet the holy Roman church has been set before the rest by no conciliar decrees*, but has obtained the primacy by the *voice of our Lord and Saviour in the gospel*: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock . . . shall be loosed in heaven." . . . The first see of the apostle Peter is therefore the Roman church, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."[106]

A clearer statement as to the divine institution of the Roman primacy one can scarcely find in the fourth century. This is especially important since St. Damasus denies what some scholars have interpreted from the Council of Sardica, namely, that Rome was *given* primacy by a council of bishops. St. Damasus couldn't be clearer that primacy derives from no conciliar decrees whatsoever. It is, rather, rooted in the investiture given to St. Peter while Christ stood before him and spoke the famous *Tu es Petrus*, which means the Roman Church's primacy is derived from

---

Emperor Constantius; see Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 3.20, *New Advent*. Pope Liberius had sent Vincent to represent him at the Council of Arles (353); see Lester L. Field Jr., *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century Synodal Formulae in the Codex Veronesis LX* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004), 41n46.

[103] Jasper and Fuhrmann, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages*, 8.

[104] W. H. C. Frend, "The Origins of the Papacy," in *The Papacy*, eds. Paul Johnson and Michael Walsh (London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997), 38.

[105] Some scholars have dated this to the fifth century (or even later), but, according to Kidd, who quotes the distinguished ecclesiastical historian, Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, "It has been assigned with greater probability to 'the Roman council under Damasus' of 382" (Beresford Kidd, *The Roman Primacy: To A.D. 461* [London: The MacMillan Publishing Company, 1936], 69).

[106] Council of Rome (382), *Post ha omnes*, *PL* 13.374, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 131.

the office given to the person of St. Peter. Moreover, St. Damasus's decree also follows Sardica in placing the ground of Rome's primacy in the headship of Peter over the universal Church and not the political explanation that would appear to be floated by the Byzantines in the latter part of the fourth century.[107] By saying that the See of Rome was first by the "voice" of Jesus Christ in the *Tu es Petrus* is none other than saying that the investment of authority in Peter had passed on to his lineal successors. This would also serve as Rome's explanation for the primitive acts of enforcing her views on the other churches going back to at least the second century.

St. Damasus's words are also the "Roman answer to the post-Constantinian theory of ecclesiastical authority in doctrine and discipline."[108] As we saw above, the Church was organizing her synodal government based on the metropolitical organization of the provincial structure of the Roman Empire, and Byzantine bishops of the time were attributing far more to this schema than was originally held by the primitive Church. For St. Damasus, it was St. Peter, as the chief and head of the Apostles, from whom ecclesiastical primacy was ordered. Therefore, the churches of Antioch and Alexandria also had respective *Petrine primacies*[109] of their own. Some scholars have seen this ideology held by the popes to be pure imagination since the order of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch does not derive from St. Peter's primacy but from the order of cities in the Roman Empire.[110] But the practice of establishing mother churches to be homes for further missions seems to have begun extremely early. Thus, such a schema was possibly already in the missionary plan of the Apostles and simply matched the leadership of the Apostles with the preeminent cities of the Roman Empire.

What cannot be denied is that the chief cities of the Roman Empire intersected with the ministry of the Apostle Peter. Moreover, that it was Peter's primacy which was claimed to ground the Roman primacy. As we will see, not even the Byzantines denied this. But for whatever reason, while recognizing that Rome was first (see canon 3 of Constantinople, 381), they thought an extension to the schema already recognized in folding the Church's organization with that of the geo-political structure

[107] This deserves more commentary further down.

[108] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 257.

[109] This deserves special attention and will be treated further below. There was a diversity in the manner in which the three sees inherited a Petrine trait.

[110] Kidd, *The Roman Primacy*, 71; John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 131–32.

afforded Constantinople this new privilege. It does not necessarily deny the Petrine foundation of Rome's primacy, but it seeks to take one aspect of its foundation (i.e., being the capital of the Roman Empire), and extend from it a partial parallel for the new capital of the empire. This Petrine inheritance also comes out in a reply epistle to the East by St. Damasus occasioned by the need for authoritative discipline. Certain Eastern presbyters of the church in Berytus appealed to the pope in order to secure the condemnation of their bishop, Timothy the Apollinarian.[111] St. Damasus replies:

> Inasmuch as your love renders to the Apostolic See *the reverence which is its due*. . . . For even though in the holy church *in which the holy apostle sat*,[112] and taught us how it becomes us to *manage the rudder which has been committed to us*. . . . Know then that we have condemned Timotheus,[113] the unhallowed, the disciple of Apollinarius the heretic, together with his impious doctrine, and are confident that for the future his remains will have no weight whatever.[114]

A rudder is the device at the stern of a ship that allows the ship to turn left or right in order to change directions. Damasus here believes that the Roman church, as a result of inheriting St. Peter's leadership, has been given the responsibility for steering the rudder of the Church. The imagery is unmistakable. More evidence is available. Upon his election as the bishop of Rome, St. Damasus had entered into a long-lasting rivalry with Ursinus, who himself was also elected to be Rome's bishop. The feud lasted for years. In one epistle to the emperors from a synod in Aquileia (381), which included St. Ambrose of Milan, the bishops there had requested that the secular powers should not allow "disturbance to reach the Roman Church, *head* of the whole Roman world, and that sacred trust of the Apostles, whence *flow all the rights of venerable communion upon all persons*."[115] Rome, says St. Ambrose, is the place from where legit-

[111] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 258.

[112] The Apostle Peter's presidency.

[113] Timothy.

[114] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.10, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 3, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/27025.htm.

[115] Saint Ambrose, *Letters*, vol. 26, *Fathers of the Church*, trans. Sister Mary Melchior Beyenka, O.P. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1954), 215. For many

imate communion flows unto all baptized persons. This unmistakably alludes to the concept of the Cyprianic Chair of Peter as the universal principle or origin of unity and communion. This is no surprise since, in his explanation of the Church's creed, St. Ambrose held that it was in Rome that "*Peter, the first of the Apostles, sat.*"[116] It was the bishop of Rome who had a special post to "guard the door which has been entrusted"[117] to him, St. Ambrose says, in order to "watch over the fold of Christ."[118] It was the Roman bishop who, as a universal *shepherd*, should keep the sheep of Christ *from scattering.*[119] Another contemporary of St. Damasus was the great biblical theologian St. Jerome (347–420), and he also speaks to the role of the pope as universal shepherd who is installed by God to prevent the sheep from, as St. Ambrose said, "scattering." While St. Jerome was residing in the East (Syrian Desert)[120] during the unfortunate schism of Antioch (circa late 370s), where debates were still had over Christological doctrine and terminology, he wrote the following to St. Damasus:

> Since the East, *shattered as it is by the long-standing feuds*, subsisting between its peoples, is bit by bit tearing into shreds the seamless vest of the Lord . . . *I think it my duty to consult the chair of Peter*, and to turn to a church whose faith has been praised by Paul. . . . My words are spoken to the *successor of the fisherman*, to the disciple of the cross. As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, *that is with the chair of Peter*. For this, I know, *is the rock on which the church is built!* This is the house where alone the paschal lamb can be rightly eaten. This is the Ark of Noah, and he who is not found in it shall

Orthodox, the right of communion doesn't descend from one church to all other churches but is simply enclosed within the local church with the valid Eucharist. If Christ is in the Eucharist, then the local liturgy has its own right of communion. However, Ambrose here is speaking from an entirely different conception. The Anglican scholar Trevor Jalland is willing to entertain that these words of Ambrose surpass a primacy of honor or faith and ascend to that of a "primacy of arbitration" (*Church and Papacy*, 262).

[116] Ambrose, *Explanatio Symboli ad Initiandos*, *PL* 17.1158, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 146.

[117] Council of Milan (391), "To Siricius," as quoted in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 147.

[118] Council of Milan (391), "To Siricius," in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 147.

[119] Council of Milan (391), "To Siricius," in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 147.

[120] J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), 46–56.

> perish when the flood prevails. . . . *He that gathers not with you scatters.*[121]

The underlying logic here is amply Cyprianic, but the reader will notice that St. Jerome, like Pope St. Stephen, takes the idea to its further logical end.[122] If the Lord gave to St. Peter the Chair of Unity, which must be adhered to for maintaining one's place in the one Church, then it would be Peter's See (i.e., Rome) vis-à-vis all the churches, and not just within the local diocese (Cyprian), which retains this binding gravitational force. Here we have the *Tu es Petrus* being cited as the grounds for Rome's primacy, and St. Jerome even says that this office of primacy (Chair of Peter) is the rock upon which the Church stays standing.

To this, he adds the Church that is in communion with Rome is the only house (harkening back to the household of Israel) where the Eucharist is properly consumed. You cannot get a clearer claim to a visible criterion for the legitimacy of the Christian family meal. Thereafter, the Roman communion is the ark which keeps all who are on board safe from the coming deluge. Lastly, he says that those who fail to keep the Roman communion are those who scatter, which makes for an image of scattering sheep. If St. Jerome does not intend to mean what he says, this would be an irresponsible use of Sacred Scripture. Most interesting of all is how St. Jerome understands a certain doctrinal supremacy that is implied by its power of unification. He even supposes that St. Damasus could issue a decree which makes a *new creed* altogether to supersede that of the Council of Nicaea. "If you think fit enact a decree; and then I shall not hesitate to speak of three hypostases. *Order a new creed to supersede the Nicene.*"[123]

## St. Meletius of Antioch and the Communion of Rome (361–381)

As we saw above, there had been many Eastern bishops who severed communion with Rome at the Council of Sardica (343), which led to

[121] St. Jerome, Letter 15, §1–2, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 6, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001015.htm (emphasis added).

[122] Cyprian resorted to making every bishop his own pope, i.e., center of unity, thereby alleviating the local bishop of any accountability above himself. This betrays the very logical concept of having an origin of unity if that origin is for each to decide as his own.

[123] Jerome, Letter 15, §4, *New Advent*.

masses of semi-Arian-led churches in the East that far outnumbered those remaining faithful to the Council of Nicaea (325). The Arian bishops had sought all sorts of sophistical methods of tweaking the faith to fit what they thought was from God. A certain St. Eustathius (ca. 360), bishop of Antioch, who firmly upheld to the Creed of Nicaea, was "deposed and succeeded by the Arianizing Leontius and his successor Eudoxius."[124] When it came time for St. Meletius to be installed as bishop in Antioch (361), there were further complications made against unity. Concerning St. Meletius, in particular, a great deal should be said due to the fact that many contemporary Orthodox and Protestant apologists seek to point to his story as a sort of proof-event against the papacy. The argument goes something like this: St. Meletius lived and died during the Second Ecumenical Council and even presided at the council while outside of communion with Rome, and yet he is a venerable saint enjoying the vision of God in heaven, even according to Rome! Ergo, one does not need to obey the pope or retain his communion for salvation. Is this often-made claim justified? Before answering this, some preliminary background is required.

The historian Socrates Scholasticus reports that St. Meletius had subscribed to a creed composed at the Synod of Seleucia (359) which rejected the Nicene terminology of *homoousian* and proposed that the Son of God is *homoion* (like) God the Father,[125] perhaps to strictly avoid Sabellianism. If this is true, then St. Meletius came from an Arianizing past. What we do know is that he later proved himself to be a firm believer in the Creed of Nicaea after his entrance into the bishopric of Antioch[126] and was consequently banished into exile by the Emperor Constantius II. Thereupon, a certain Arian candidate, Euzoius, was installed as bishop of Antioch, and the Church in that place came under the dark cloud of heresy. Those Christians in Antioch who refused to subscribe to Arianism separated into their own communities. One Nicene faction in Antioch was known for their strict adherence to St. Eustathius of Antioch, mentioned above, who was unsurprisingly deposed. With him gone, the orthodox assembled their own liturgical services under a leading

[124] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 83.

[125] Socrates, *Church History* 2.40 and 44, *New Advent*.

[126] Socrates, *Church History* 2.44, *New Advent*. St. Epiphanius of Salamis (310–403) gives a record of the Nicene homily delivered by St. Meletius upon entrance into office in book II, 73:29–33, of his *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book II and III. De Fide*, second ed., trans. Frank Williams (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 473–79.

presbyter named Paulinus.[127] These Eustathians, as those who followed Paulinus were to be called, did not recognize the election of St. Meletius due to his being selected from the party of the Arians. Throughout the term of St. Meletius's office in Antioch, he was exiled a total of three times, and this also served to frustrate peaceful resolutions between East and West during his bishopric.[128]

When Julian "the Apostate" (361–363) took the imperial throne, he recalled exiled clergy back to their home. That included Sts. Meletius and Athanasius the Great. There was an attempt at healing the schism between Antioch and Alexandria, made first from Sardica (343), through St. Athanasius's outstretched hand to Eastern clergy, including St. Meletius. However, due to being suspicious about Meletius's past, the great Athanasius settled to commune with the party of Paulinus in Antioch, who had sent him a statement of orthodox faith.[129] With the East coming under more decades of heretical dissensions, St. Basil of Caesarea, who would become a golden trophy of Nicene orthodoxy, took extra steps to try to bring healing to the Lord's flock. He wrote to St. Athanasius requesting him to consult with Western bishops to send a deputized body to come to the East in order to set things in right order. In particular, St. Basil's concern was over the schism between the Arians and the orthodox at Antioch: "I myself desire to see Meletius recognized as the head of the Church of Antioch."[130] In another letter to Athanasius, he writes:

> It has seemed to me to be desirable to send a letter to the bishop of Rome, begging him to examine our condition, and since there are difficulties in the way of representatives being sent from the West by a general synodical decree,[131] *to advise him to exercise his own personal authority in the*

[127] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 83.

[128] St. Gregory of Nyssa's Funeral Oration on Meletius, §1, states he was "thrice" exiled, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 5, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2909.htm.

[129] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 84; Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, 282.

[130] St. Basil, Letter 66, in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 638.

[131] This indicates that the "Western bishops" who were sought by Basil in Letter 66 were thought to be represented by the bishop of Rome. Since a synodal decree was becoming more and more untenable, the authority of the head, i.e., the pope, should suffice with a few legates.

> *matter by choosing suitable persons to sustain the labours of a journey.*[132]

For some reason, this Caesarean bishop thought that the bishop of Rome could send legates to "examine" the situation in the East. Some sort of primacy of initiative was clearly assumed. As it turned out, the efforts to obtain help from the pope were not proving to be fruitful. Meanwhile, the schism in Antioch continued to brew. St. Basil saw the time for a hopeful solution waning and wrote the bishop of Rome himself, pleading for a visitation. Because of unknown circumstances, the East did not obtain the sort of aid they requested. To make matters worse, both St. Athanasius and St. Damasus had given recognition to one of the rivals of St. Meletius, Paulinus, as the true bishop of Antioch. It is certain that they had little to no true knowledge of what was going on in Antioch, and for all they knew, Paulinus was the only Nicene. No evidence, however, exists of any formal excommunication of St. Meletius. When a letter from the West came in 375 giving recognition to Paulinus, Basil was unhappy to hear of this: "I am not astonished at this. They are totally *ignorant* of what is going on here."[133] However, he must have understood that there were reasonable barriers which forbade the West from truly grasping the situation, for he explains that he holds no one in the West guilty of their mistake:

> I accuse no one. . . . I congratulate those who have received the letter [*of recognition*] from Rome. And, although it is a grand testimony in their favour, I only hope it is true and confirmed by facts. *But I shall never be able to persuade myself on these grounds to ignore Meletius*, or to forget the Church which is under him, or to treat as small, and of little

[132] Basil, Letter 69, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 8, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202069.htm (emphasis added). In this epistle, St. Basil says Athanasius is their head and chief in the enterprise of rescuing the East. However, since the context shows that Basil is seeking assistance from the West and, in particular, from the Roman bishop, this terminology should be understood as "head" in the effort to mediate the East and West and not in a sense of ecclesiastical primacy.

[133] Basil, Letter 214, §2, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 8, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202214.htm.

> importance to the true religion, the questions which originated the division. *I shall never consent to give in*, merely because somebody is very much elated at receiving a letter from men. *Even if it had come down from heaven itself, but he does not agree with the sound doctrine of the faith, I cannot look upon him as in communion with the saints.*[134]

St. Basil's understanding of the Western mistake on the situation in Antioch is further described in an epistle of his to Eusebius of Samosata:

> Men who do not know the truth, and do not wish to learn it, but are prejudiced by false suspicions . . . they know nothing of what is going on here, and will not accept the only means whereby they might learn it. *I would say, generally, that they ought not to press hard on men who are crushed by trials.*[135]

It appears that St. Basil understood that the West had been operating from false information and so were led to make the wrong decision for Paulinus over St. Meletius. However, by 376, St. Basil had received news that St. Damasus and other bishops had gathered and finally responded to Eastern concerns. In a letter to the East, a Roman synod had reviewed certain Christological heresies, affirmed the Nicene Creed, and outputted some other disciplinary matters. In response, St. Basil had sent an *epistle of thanksgiving* to the Westerners in 377. Although, it is clear he felt their contribution still needed more work. He wrote:

> It is these that we implore your diligence to denounce publicly to all the Churches of the East; to the end that they may either turn to the right way and join with us in *genuine alliance.*[136]

---

[134] Basil, Letter 214, §2, *New Advent.*

[135] Basil, Letter 239, §2, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 8, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202239.htm. The Western Bishops were appearing to be aloof about the struggles going on in the East, which made it seem like the non-recognition of St. Meletius as unjustly harsh and a hasty decision.

[136] Basil, Letter 263, §2, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

In other words, St. Basil was adamant to implore the Western bishops "to condemn the [Eastern] heretics as well, by name."[137] St. Basil alluded to the question of Paulinus's recognition held in Rome, and only expressed concern that by doing so, the pope would be accepting the communion of the followers of Marcellus, who was a heretic who veered to the side of Sabellianism. The principal aim of the above letter is enshrined in these final words which, if anything, show that St. Basil was still in recognition of the communion and authoritative influence of the West, in particular the bishop of Rome, and continued to seek its help:

> This will be the case if you will consent to write to all the Churches of the East that those who have perverted these doctrines are in communion with you, *if they amend*. . . . I have therefore been constrained to dispatch these brethren, that you may learn from them all that has been omitted in my letter, and that they may *rouse you to afford the succour which we pray for to the Churches of the East*.[138]

It is important to see that St. Basil did not understand the See of Rome to have been either in heresy or in gross schism from the orthodox East, which St. Meletius, in his mind, aptly represented on behalf of Antioch. Rome was misled because the West had falsely reported on St. Meletius.[139] This breakage in canonical recognition between Rome and St. Meletius was grounded in such a chaotic mixture of misinformation, the imperial persecutions, and the difficulty in exchanging communication rapidly. Through and through, by the testimony of St. Basil, the See of Rome is sought for help to resolve the Antiochene problem. Therefore, any Orthodox apologist who seeks to paint St. Meletius as proudly maintaining his position while also thumbing his nose at the idea of being in communion with Rome is painting a different picture than what the facts portray. As the great Anglican historian Chadwick noted, St. Meletius "was known to long for restored communion with Rome."[140] That is, if he thought he was even deprived of it.

---

[137] Field, *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, 131.

[138] Basil, Letter 263, §5, *New Advent*.

[139] Basil had received information from Dorotheus that the West had been under the impression that the orthodoxy of Meletius was sketchy. See Basil, Letter 266, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 8, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202266.htm.

[140] Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford

A second letter which had a condemnation of Apollinarianism was dispatched from Rome to the East. This time, the See of Antioch made a formal occasion of receiving this Roman letter. In the latter part of 379, orthodox bishops from Syria and Asia Minor, including St. Meletius,[141] had gathered into a synod and subscribed to the *Roman decree*. This also shows that St. Meletius was well aware of the orthodoxy of Rome, and it would certainly be curious if an Antiochene synod of 150 bishops would openly endorse a statement of faith from Rome if the Meletian community in Antioch were under the impression that Rome had condemned them for schism. At the finish of their synod, we read:

> Here ends this letter or exposition of the Roman synod held under Pope Damasus, and sent to the East, to which all the Eastern Church, having held a synod at Antioch, *agrees in the same faith*; and all thus agreeing confirm the faith explained above, each one by his own signature.[142]

This document was signed by St. Meletius, with his name visibly subscribed at the bottom, and sent to Rome,[143] and "was duly registered in the archives"[144] in the Roman church. Subscription to this by St. Meletius, as head of the Synod of Antioch, *would be simply unthinkable if he were under the impression that the pope had a canonical ban of excommunication on him by papal mandate*, or if he thought the pope was excommunicated from Antioch. On the contrary, St. Meletius gave "approval of every utterance of Pope Damasus of which he could get a copy."[145] According to Dr. Lester L. Fields, Jr.,[146] this Antiochene synod, over which St. Meletius presided and confirmed in agreement with Pope St. Damasus's statement of faith, *was the formal means of repairing communion with Antioch and the West*. On this, Fields wrote: "In receiving the synodical letter from

---

University Press, 2001; revised 2004), 426.

[141] He had returned to Antioch by an Edict of Toleration by orthodox emperor Gratian (379).

[142] *PL* 13.353, in *The Early Papacy: To the Synod of Chalcedon in 451*, fourth ed., by Adrian Fortescue, ed. Alcuin Reid (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 97. See also English translation of the whole script of the decree from the Roman synod with the Antiochene Synods approval in *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, by Field, 11–21.

[143] E. Giles, *Documents*, 135. Meletius's name is at the top of the list of signatures.

[144] Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter*, 230. See also *PL* 13.354, as referenced in *The Development of the Papacy*, by H. Burn-Murdoch (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), 169n3.

[145] Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 426.

[146] Professor of History and Medieval Studies.

Antioch, the Roman church recognized Meletius as bishop of Antioch and president of the Antiochene synod."[147] What is missing, of course, is any clear evidence on how Pope St. Damasus would have received all of this at Rome, considering he viewed Paulinus as the true bishop of Antioch, at least hitherto. We happen to have the original Roman decree sent to Antioch as their own pledge. To the Easterners, Rome said:

> This [*decree*], most beloved brothers, is our faith. Everyone who follows it is our partner. . . . *For these we offer ourselves as communion.*[148]

We are well within reason to suppose that, at the very least, St. Meletius was in total agreement with this Roman synodal decree, and so, from his perspective, he would have taken that to mean he had Roman communion. If we rely on the cited scholarship that the Antiochene subscriptions were transmitted and archived at Rome, then we might reasonably suppose St. Damasus acknowledged the orthodoxy of St. Meletius, at the very least. No evidence of protest of St. Meletius's name signed in the official document is known. One other related occurrence happened in the same year (379), which must also be reviewed.

When the Arianizing Emperor Valens had died, Gratian rose to power, and he issued an edict which sought to bring order to the churches from their devastating division under Arian emperors. Of course, that meant reconciling the Eastern churches with the West. The first order of business was to determine which bishops should have the lawful title to Church buildings, and that meant ascertaining who were the heretics and schismatics versus those who were in the peace and communion of Christ's Body. For Gratian, the working criterion to identify those who were in communion was simply to look for the bishops who agreed with

---

[147] Field, *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, 133. Although Field produced an entire monograph on this precise subject of St. Meletius and Rome, I found Dr. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz's summary of Field to be more comprehensible of the situation. He summarizes the findings of Field's scholarship on this conciliar decree of union between Antioch and Rome, as found in the eighth century *Codex Veronesis LX*, in the following: "The council affirmed the presidency of the recently returned [*from exile*] Meletius, *secured his communion with Damasus of Rome*, and ratified a Roman creed that would *still be invoked as the basis of orthodox relations with the Western bishops in 382*;" see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study* (Oxford University Press USA, 2018), 19 (emphasis added).

[148] *Exemplum synodi* II, 69–72, in *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, by Field, 135 (emphasis added).

Pope St. Damasus. That is rather peculiar. What could have been the motive? The mandate of his edict sought the "exiled shepherds to return, and to be restored to their flocks," and to order the "sacred buildings to be delivered to congregations *adopting communion with Damasus*."[149] Gratian authorized a certain General Sapor to depose the Arian bishops and restore the Nicenes, who would be those agreeing with the Apostolic See of Rome. The inevitable difficulty with this is that Antioch had more than one claimant to the episcopal throne who were Nicene, and it appears all of them agreed with Damasus. General Sapor arrived and presented the edict of Gratian, and the question was narrowed down to which of the two should be given the title to the sacred buildings, Meletius or Paulinus? Since both claimed communion and agreement with Damasus, and were thus Nicene, there was a standoff.

Immediately, Paulinus claimed that he was the one who held the communion of Damasus. In response to this, Flavian, a presbyter, challenged this claim based on his perception that the "admirable Damasus"[150] held to a different faith than Paulinus. When it came time for St. Meletius to speak, he said that the Lord committed to both himself and Paulinus a certain flock, and that since both were in communion with each other, both flocks should unite together and be joint-ministers as two bishops in one Church. Then, when one dies, a successor to him won't be ordained, and the last of the two will return to the canonical norm.[151]

Paulinus, according to the Antiochene historian Theodoret, did not agree with this.[152] Thereupon, General Sapor, who was sent by the emperor to hand over the sacred buildings to those holding to the communion of Damasus, "gave the churches *to the great Meletius*."[153] This report of the situation was written by Theodoret's time, which is approximately 450, about eighty years after the events. Nevertheless, Theodoret was a native to Antioch and would likely have had great corroboration to his story. On the other hand, the Greek historian Socrates, writing nearly twenty

[149] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.2, *New Advent*.

[150] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.3, *New Advent*. Flavian, a close disciple of St. Meletius, refers to Damasus as a model of orthodoxy.

[151] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.3, *New Advent*. Notice how Meletius understands his own flock and that belonging to Paulinus were already being "in communion" with each other. Clearly, that was not how it looked on the ground. However, in Meletius's mind, he must have been speaking about the singular shared faith.

[152] However, this seems very unlikely since Gregory of Nazianzus, while bishop of Constantinople at the Council of Constantinople (381), thought it was a valid pact; see Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works*, 18n55.

[153] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.3, *New Advent*.

years earlier to the time of Theodoret, gives a different account wherein the union was *successful between Meletius and Paulinus.*[154] I would imagine they had some sort of pact in relation to which sacred buildings would go to whom.

In either case, we cannot ignore the perspective that by now St. Meletius would have been given either the testimony of Theodoret or Socrates, which was that he had the communion of Rome. He had now two visible proofs of this. First, the imperial recognition under Emperor Gratian to give the sacred buildings back to the bishops in Roman communion. This he obtained. Secondly, he had presided at the Synod in Antioch which subscribed to the Decree of Rome for doctrinal unity. Scholars are somewhat divided on the reality of this "pact" between St. Meletius and Paulinus, but it certainly bore a functional theory of how the West came to terms with the coexistence of two bishops, as we'll see below.

Still, one other piece of evidence related to the above is the edict issued by the newly installed Emperor Theodosius I (379–392),[155] who would take over the jurisdiction of the East, where Gratian then took up just the West. The first order of business for him was to radically define what the doctrine of the East would be so as to give a criterion for membership in the Catholic Church. This edict states:

> It is Our Will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency *shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans,* as the religion which he introduced makes clear even unto this day. It is evident that this is the religion that is followed by the *Pontiff Damasus* and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria.[156]

Once again, out of the mouth of the emperor of the East, the name Damasus is uttered as a defining mark of the true faith. In no unclear terms, the Petrine-Roman tradition is being held up as the standard for the empire and particularly for the churches of Antioch and Constantinople. This should be noted, since it was Theodosius who later convened the council held in Constantinople (381,) which many critics

[154] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.5, *New Advent.*

[155] Published "in the name of Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I to the people of Constantinople" (Frend and Stevenson, eds., *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies,* 160).

[156] *Co. Theod.* XVI, 1.2, in "An Edict on the Profession of the Catholic Faith," in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies,* eds. Frend and Stevenson, 160.

of the papacy have utilized to disprove the papal claims. I will return to that shortly, but for a moment, I need to return to the "pact" referred to above bridging the Meletians and the Paulinians in Antioch.

More evidence of this pact comes from the conciliar epistle to all three emperors[157] from a Western council held in Aquileia, of which the great St. Ambrose took part. In that epistle, it is said that both the flocks of St. Meletius and Paulinus have thought themselves in communion with Western bishops.[158] Recognizing that the church in Antioch was divided between parties who held to the same Nicene faith, they petitioned the emperors that the flock of St. Meletius "should be added to our fellowship."[159] This was supposed to be achievable on the grounds that "on the death of one the rights of the church might remain in the possession of the survivor and no other ordination should be attempted by force."[160] Therefore, we have conciliar evidence *of a Western synod*, no doubt also in communication with their head, Pope St. Damasus, being open to an arrangement for two Nicene bishops co-ruling the Antiochene church. This was no doubt a compromise from canonical rules, but it was thought of as a temporary fix to the bishopric of Antioch, in light of the extreme circumstance, until one or the other departed from this life.

The problem, however, was that when the Eastern bishops had assembled by the summons of Theodosius in Constantinople (381), over which St. Meletius had initially presided, they elected the presbyter Flavian to succeed Meletius when the latter fell asleep in the Lord midway through the council. In other words, the bishops at the council discarded the peace-pact between St. Meletius and Paulinus. In consequence, St. Ambrose with fellow bishops wrote another letter, this time only to Emperor Theodosius, complaining of this violation,[161] which St. Gregory of Nazianzen and others had sought to prevent at the

[157] Showing this to be of upmost ecumenical concern for all the churches.

[158] The council says that both parties in Antioch have sent letters of communion to the West; see *Council of Aquileia, To the Emperors*, in Ambrose, Epistle 12, *PL* 16.988, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 139.

[159] Ambrose, Epistle 12, *PL* 16.988, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 139.

[160] Ambrose, Epistle 12, *PL* 16.988, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 139.

[161] Ambrose, Epistle 13, To Theodosius I, *PL* 16.990, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 140. Sozomen writes: "After the pompous interment of the remains of Meletius, Flavian was ordained in his stead, and that, too, *in direct violation of the oath he had taken*; for Paulinus was still alive. . . . The bishop of Rome, and all the Western priests, regarded the conduct of Flavian with the utmost displeasure" (*Ecclesiastical History* 7.11, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Chester D. Hartranft [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890], rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26027.htm).

council.[162] This refusal of the council to abide by the pact, among other things, so "horrified Gregory that as a protest he promptly resigned the see of Constantinople,"[163] and subsequently the council brashly chose "Nectarius, an unbaptized laymen,"[164] to be quickly run through the sacraments of Holy Orders and then placed as the bishop of Constantinople, that is, the new president of the council.

Of course, Nectarius agreed to reject Paulinus and to give the throne of Antioch to Flavian. Where at once Antioch held hope in the union pact made under Gratian, this violation of it with Flavian reverted Antioch back into schism with the West, all the while holding to the same Nicene faith.

The council's decisions did not meet the satisfaction of the West. We know from St. Ambrose that he did not think the proceedings of any ecumenical council should be considered finalized being done so "lawfully and according to the custom" of a Western synod under the bishop of Rome,[165] as was done with St. Athanasius. The council held in Rome (382) denied recognition to Flavian, especially since the latter was in attendance in Rome, and it also appears to have annulled its third canon, giving Constantinople second place after Rome.

What observations might be further drawn, given this turn of events? While it is certain that St. Damasus held to Paulinus as the true bishop of Antioch, and that the East, with the significant exception of the great Alexandria, was overwhelmingly in favor of St. Meletius, *there seems to be lacking any official excommunication of St. Meletius by Rome.* Surely, it was a huge problem to have two claimants to the single bishopric of Antioch, but given the circumstances, there are good reasons to believe the hype of *Meletius vs. Rome* is more of a fiction concocted by Anglican critics of papal primacy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The primacy of Rome does not take a substantial hit even if the irregularities of the situation stand in their worst possible interpretation against the papal claims. Many of the modern usages of the Meletian schism pretend as if the communication between the East and the West was a matter of sending an immediate text message, or as if leaders could assemble at

[162] Field, *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, 190.

[163] J. W. C. Wand, *A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 190.

[164] J. W. C. Wand, *A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500*, 190.

[165] Ambrose, Letter 13, in *The Letters of S. Ambrose* (London: Oxford, James Parker and Co., and Rivingtons, 1881), accessible at Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/58783/58783-h/58783-h.htm#b077b.

round tables and create a video chat room from one side of the world to the other. In fact, communications were very strained. Making a trip to the East itself during this time included the danger of persecution, given the imperial aggression employed in favor of Nicene modifications.

It should not be forgotten that St. Meletius himself had questionable origins, rejected communion with St. Athanasius, and was thrice in exile away from a venue from which to have his situation adjudicated. According to patristics scholar Fr. Brian Daley, S.J., "Meletius, as contemporary documents reveal, devoted his episcopal career to promoting a theology and a liturgical practice that *avoided both* the Nicene and Arian extremes, but that often struggled to find precise expression."[166] Rome, most likely receiving most of its information through Alexandria, had all the more reason to hold St. Meletius in suspicion. St. Meletius himself, however, was sure of his unity with Rome. It is a great oversimplification, therefore, for critics of the papacy to try and observe from this situation that St. Meletius simply had no trouble being outside of communion with Rome.

Further corroborating evidence for this interpretation is found in St. Jerome's letters to St. Damasus, one of which unmistakably shows belief in the Roman See as the essential principle of ecclesial unity.[167] During his time in Syria and Antioch, he reports the following to Damasus: "Meletius, Vitalis, and Paulinus all profess to cleave to you, and I could believe the assertion if it were made by one of them only."[168] This letter was written around 377–378, which is just two to three years before the death of St. Meletius, and the only report we have of the latter's stance is that of being in peace with the Roman See. In addition, it cannot

[166] Brian E. Daley, "The Enigma of Meletius of Antioch," in *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*, eds. Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 132.

[167] Jerome, Letter 15, *New Advent*, §1–2: "Since the East, shattered as it is by the long-standing feuds, subsisting between its peoples, is bit by bit tearing into shreds the seamless vest of the Lord . . . I think it my duty to consult the chair of Peter, and to turn to a church whose faith has been praised by Paul. . . . My words are spoken to the successor of the fisherman, to the disciple of the cross. As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the rock on which the church is built! This is the house where alone the paschal lamb can be rightly eaten. This is the Ark of Noah, and he who is not found in it shall perish when the flood prevails. . . . He that gathers not with you scatters."

[168] Jerome, Letter 16, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 6, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001016.htm.

be stressed enough that both Syriac and Greek histories record that he openly received the sacred buildings from the order of Gratian, through General Sapor, buildings which were to be given to those holding the "communion of Damasus," and it is about this event that St. Meletius might even be speaking, besides his subscription to the Roman doctrinal decree at the Council of Antioch (378).

On the other hand, Flavian's election to the chair of Antioch at the Council of Constantinople (381) seems to be an open defiance of the peace-pact wherein any hope of continued communion with Rome and the West could be considered possible. The ordination of Flavian further strained the relationship between East and West, and Paulinus's death paved the way for a settled schism since a certain Evagrius was ordained to succeed him, leaving a *Flavian versus Evagrius* conflict in Antioch.

How was this catastrophe resolved? Unsurprisingly, Theodosius ordered Flavian *to go to Rome*, an order with which the latter showed willingness to cooperate.[169] Although Flavian never made it to Rome, the Apostolic See came to recognize Flavian under the pontificate of St. Damasus's successor, St. Siricius, through the agency of a council in Alexandria under its bishop, Theophilus.[170] The historian Socrates notes: "*Communion being in this way restored to Flavian*, the people of Antioch were in the course of a little while induced to acquiesce in the union secured."[171]

So we can see how papal intervention is what was sought as the final arbitration of this dispute over the ecclesial status of Flavian. A fifth century papal commentary on the Antiochene schism also sheds some light on this affair. Pope St. Boniface wrote:

> When the Church of Antioch had been in trouble a long time, so that there was *continual passing to and fro for this*, first under Meletius, afterwards under Flavian, it is notorious that *the Apostolic See was consulted. By whose authority*, after many things done by our Church, everyone knows that Flavian received the grace of communion, *which he*

[169] Theodoret, *History* 5.23, *New Advent*.

[170] Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, 481–82.

[171] Socrates, *Church History* 5.15, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. A.C. Zenos (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26015.htm (emphasis added).

*would have forfeited forever, had not writings gone from hence respecting it.*[172]

It is obvious that St. Boniface here understands communion with the Apostolic See to be requisite for the "grace" of communion with the Church. It is also clear from this that the situation of St. Meletius versus Rome was not, as some think, simply a matter superfluous to the mind of the former. Letters were commuting "to and fro," which means the situation was a work in progress. Likewise, St. Basil shows no sign of being out of communion with Rome. His constant appeals to the West for aid and intervention show quite the opposite.

Modern scholarship on this has reached its latest treatment of the Meletian schism and the papal communion in Lester L. Fields, Jr.,[173] but one much older work of scholarship seems to have captured the real situation and how it should be understood. That work was accomplished by an Irish Catholic archbishop of Baltimore, Francis Patrick Kenrick (1796–1863), whose book *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated* was dedicated to Pope Pius IX, to which the latter expressed a personal letter of thanks and confidence in the integrity of the book.[174] The difference between Kenrick and Fields is that the latter believes that canonical and public communion was fully realized between St. Meletius and Rome through the acceptance of the Roman decree at Antioch (379), the records of which were stored in Roman archives.[175] But a skeptic might question whether this meant that St. Damasus then recognized St. Meletius as a openly valid communicant. Keeping that major

[172] Boniface, Epistle 15.6, *Ad Rufum et Alios Epis*, in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, by Scott, 389. Also translated in *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, by Field, 200.

[173] See three reviews: Robin Ward, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2006): 732–34, www.jstor.org/stable/23971781; Lionel R. Wickham, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56.2 (Cambridge University Press, 2005): 341–42; Glenn L. Thompson, *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 1, Catholic University of America Press (January 2005), 132–33.

[174] Francis Patrick Kenrick, *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1857). See the letter of Pius IX before the *Preface* in the 1855 version.

[175] Oddly enough, Field argues that a public and real communion was realized between St. Damasus and St. Meletius even if the pope didn't particularly have that intention in mind. He gets this from the fact that the Roman decree sent to the East, which Antioch solemnly ratified in 379 (*Confidimus quidem*), settled the offer of communion to anyone in the East who would subscribe. Emperor Theodosius issued an imperial rescript (*Exemplum Synodi*) prior to the Council of Constantinople (381) which publicly manifested an acceptance by Rome of the Antiochene synod (379). This rescript was received in Rome, and so a communion was, *de jure*, effected between St. Damasus and St. Meletius, even if the former may have been surprised by the fact; see Field, *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius*, 193.

difference in mind, Kenrick's summary only helps in the debate between the Orthodox and Catholics, since he is speaking to the worst-case scenario (i.e., if St. Meletius didn't have formal communion with Rome). Kenrick's summary of the Meletian schism is worth reading in full but is substantially captured below:

> Meletius presided in a Council of Antioch, held in 379, which solemnly embraced the decrees of Damasus. . . . The acts of this council were accepted at Rome, and placed in the archives of that See, bound up with those of the Roman synod, as appears from ancient manuscripts. . . . His acceptance of the doctrinal definition of Damasus, and the Pontiff's approval of the proceedings of the Council of Antioch, were solemn acts of direct communion, which show that Meletius did not die separated from unity, from which, in reality, *he was never excluded*. . . . The integrity of the faith of Meletius, the legitimacy of his ordination, and the eminence of his virtues, were generally recognized *after his death*, when rival pretensions and interests could no longer cast a cloud over them. . . . His example may serve to show, that a man can attain to sanctity and salvation, although, from misconception and misrepresentation, *he be not favored by the chief bishop with special marks of communion*; but it offers no security to such as persevere in sects separated from the Church, contrary to the divine law, which enjoins submission to our lawful pastors, and contrary to the divine constitution of the Church, of which unity is the distinctive principle. Meletius was neither leader nor member of a sect. He held the truth as it is in Christ; he received with docility the teaching of the chief bishop; he professed adhesion to his authority, and it was his misfortune, not his fault, that he could not for a time succeed in dissipating the suspicions that deprived him of official intercourse. . . . *It is freely admitted, that, in such circumstances, the want of direct communion with the Apostolic See may not be fatal to the claims of membership of the Catholic Church*: but the nature of unity and catholicity

> manifestly forbids us to consider as members of the Church, those who positively reject her communion.[176]

It should be clear, then, that the popular appeal to the Meletian schism as a refutation of the doctrine of the essential unifying function of the Roman See rests on an unrealistic expectation of the papacy. When a matter is under dispute, together with the persons involved, final and certain sentences are in suspense, awaiting further disclosure. Even when premature sentences are passed, new information regarding the case could shed further light in a future time, changing the former sentences. St. Damasus had extraordinarily little to work with in the case of St. Meletius, and it was significant that St. Athanasius and his two successors, Sts. Peter and Timothy, refused to recognize St. Meletius as the lawful holder of the chair of Antioch. Unfortunately, St. Meletius returned the favor and refused to accept St. Athanasius as the lawful holder of the chair of Alexandria.[177] That such exclusions were not infallible is seen in the fact that Flavian, when he was finally recognized as the lawful holder of the chair of Antioch, inscribed the names of Paulinus and Evagrius, the two rivals against himself, onto the diptychs of his altar.[178] This was the preeminent sign that the mishaps of the Antiochene division were more based on miscommunication than the ill will of anyone against the Roman See.

A similar situation would be the deposition and excommunication of St. John Chrysostom by the Eastern sees. It was not until years after his death that the Eastern sees restored his name to the diptychs and subsequently confirmed him at the Council of Constantinople (553). Even if St. Meletius died outside of communion with Rome, it would not be a threat to the infallible magisterium of the pope, nor would it necessarily entail that St. Meletius is surely condemned for it. As we saw, St. Meletius himself both publicly claimed and accepted Roman communion but understood that there was a difficulty with the internal situation in Antioch for which he could not so easily yield up his throne without just cause. While the pope possesses universal jurisdiction, this does not mean that the pope is the highest law in the Church or that injustice can't

[176] Kenrick, *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*, 105–06.

[177] F. W. Puller, *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 290.

[178] Henry Wace, "Flavianus," in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature: From the First to the End of the Sixth Century AD*, eds. Henry Wace and William C. Piercy (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1994), 367.

render a pope's decision as *ultra vires*. In the case of St. Meletius, I think the best we can say is that, due to unfortunate circumstances, an orthodox bishop exiled more than once for his faith happened to be caught in a conflict whose resolution took more time than his life allowed. Something like a face-to-face council would have been the next step since it was also commonly held that men should not be condemned in their absence until there is an urgent cause for it.

And this point gets us back to that part of the Anglican or Orthodox critique which pronounces that the Second Ecumenical Council was convened outside of communion with Rome since its president, St. Meletius, was purported to be outside of her communion. Some of the mythology around this should be uncovered.

In the first place, many of the bishops who had attended the Council of Constantinople (381) assembled once again (382) and wrote a fresh synodal epistle to Rome explaining the event of 381, and one need only read the content to see that there is nothing but an eagerness on their part to have been able to meet in the city of Rome to have joined a larger council with the West recently summoned by the Western emperors. They explicitly state that it was the danger of persecutions in the East that prevented them from making such a long journey westward.[179]

Secondly, the third canon of the Council in 381, though rejected by Rome and Alexandria, assumes that the Roman church is the first church in the hierarchy of sees, where Constantinople sought to take second place. How could the council understand itself to have been convened in opposition and schism from the Apostolic See of Rome and then rank that very Roman See as the first church of universal Christendom?

Lastly, while this council was added to the list of ecumenical councils, it was in no way, shape, or form a truly ecumenical council by definition. It was convened by the Emperor Theodosius I as a regional council of the East, and even Orthodox scholarship recognizes this. According to Eastern Orthodox scholar Archbishop Peter L'Huillier, this was "exclusively an inter-diocesan synod of the eastern church."[180] The West certainly did not recognize the canons of this council, and even as close as the seventh

[179] Synod of Constantinople (A.D. 382), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3809.htm.

[180] Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, 1996), 107.

century, we see Pope St. Gregory the Great saying that Rome ratified the creed of that council but not its canons:

> But the Roman Church does not possess so far these same canons, or the acts of that council, *nor has it accepted them*, though it has accepted this same synod with regard to what was defined by it against Macedonius.[181]

When the sessions of the Council of 381 closed, the bishop of Rome was not sought to ratify their decrees, as is testified by Pope St. Leo the Great.[182] At the Council of Chalcedon (451), the sixteenth session shows the papal legates of Rome exclaiming that the third canon passed at the Council of 381 were not part of the ecumenical canons.[183] Neither Rome nor Alexandria counted the Council of 381 as ecumenical, and that is clear from the fact that the Council of Ephesus (431) shows no sign that it was pertinent to universal significance.[184] Therefore, contrary to Fr. Vladimir Guettée,[185] the Council of 381 did not carry the force of universal law for the whole Church, as all the orthodox were claiming for the Council of Nicaea. Therefore, this idea that an ecumenical council

[181] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 7.34, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360207034.htm (emphasis added).

[182] On May 22, 452, St. Leo wrote to St. Anatolius, Bishop of Constantinople, concerning the third canon of Constantinople (381) with the following words: "For your purpose is in no way whatever supported by the *written assent of certain bishops* given, as you allege, 60 years ago, and never brought to the knowledge of the Apostolic See by your predecessors" (Letter 106, §5, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895], rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604106.htm). Here, St. Leo calculates the worth of the Council of 381 as the "assent" of "certain bishops," which doesn't amount to any canonical force. The last part of the sentence implies that such canons would have had to be ratified by the Apostolic See before having any canonical force.

[183] "It is manifest that the decrees of the 318 have been put aside, and that mention only has been made of those of the 150, which are not found to have any place in the synodical canons, and which were made as they acknowledge eighty years ago. If therefore they enjoyed this privilege during these years, what do they seek for now? If they never used it, why seek it?" (Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), "Session 16," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3811.htm).

[184] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 355.

[185] Fr. Vladimir Guettée, DD, *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867), 111.

can be held without the pope, and even more that such a council could be held while in schism from Rome, is not a proposition which has any evidence from the Council of 381. In fact, later Byzantine law would render such an idea unfathomable.[186] In reality, the very emperor who convened the council in 381 had just made it clear that any and all citizens of the empire who did not agree with the faith of Pope St. Damasus were heretics.[187] Also, if he thought Rome was in schism from the council, why would he send Flavian to Rome in order to rectify the Antiochene situation, effectively being willing to suspend the decision of the Council of 381 on the successor of St. Meletius?

[186] See the words of Deacon John at the Seventh Ecumenical Council referring to the conditions of an ecumenical council in the chapter on the iconoclastic controversy in Richard Price's *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 442.

[187] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 104.

*Chapter Ten*

# The Papacy as Divinely Appointed Center of Unity for the Whole Episcopal Government

## St. Optatus of Milevus (fourth century)

A forgotten Church Father who took up his pen to write extensively on the mystery of the Church's unity is St. Optatus, bishop of Milevis. In the third century, St. Cyprian laid major ground work on the divine institution of the Petrine architecture of the Church's unity. From this Cyprianic Petrinology, the student of Christian history learns that the Church Fathers sensed that the Lord of history prepared a way for his Church to be visibly unified as one communion rather than a broken society of sects rivaling against one another for the title of the true Messianic people. And we learn from both Sts. Cyprian and Optatus that the rock of unity is the Chair of Peter. St. Optatus makes use of the same Cyprianic weaponry to enforce the Petrinological DNA as essential to the Church's episcopate in order to refute the onslaught of a new schismatic sect, the *Donatists*.

At the opening of the fourth century, Majorinus (311–315) had been elected as second bishop of Carthage to replace a "defected" Caecilian.

The latter had been ordained by men who were thought to be *traditors*[1] under the persecution of Emperor Diocletian, and thus, by a certain strict theory, the sacramental power of Caecilian's consecration was null and void.[2] The bishops holding to this strict theory pronounced his ordination invalid and paved the way for a new election. Majorinus was succeeded by Donatus, to whom the schism owes its name. Donatus's successor was Parmenian, who wrote a certain treatise defending the beliefs held by the Donatists. It is against this that St. Optatus picked up his pen in order to make a public reply. To my knowledge, he was the first that we know of who attempted to write in answer to this question: *Where is the Church*? Such a question could only be asked if and when something of the nature of the Church had been violated, and this was precisely what St. Optatus accused the Donatists of doing.

St. Optatus also laid much of the ground work upon which St. Augustine continued in his own contention with the Donatists lasting into the fifth century. He is forgotten, but his writing is worth more than gold. One preeminent theologian of the sixth century West, St. Fulgentius of Ruspe (465–527), puts St. Optatus on the same level with Sts. Augustine and Ambrose as expositors of the saving deposit of faith.[3] Now, that is quite remarkable, to say the least, especially for a saint whose name rarely gets mentioned in modern discussion. The only thing more remarkable is that St. Augustine himself adds that St. Optatus, among others, brought spiritual "gold and silver" from his written works.[4] And yet, he is one of the least known Fathers of the Church. Thankfully, within the last century, his works have been translated into the English so that this giant of a saint might be better known. His major work, *On the Schism of the Donatists Against Parmenian*,[5] was written within the years 372–375, and it is this work that makes up his reply to Parmenian.

Like St. Cyprian, St. Optatus understood that the chair given to the

[1] Those who "hand over" the Church's possessions to the secular government during persecution.

[2] This theory held that if a bishop or presbyter had committed a grievous sin, such as succumbing to persecution, he lost the grace of the sacraments, and thus any attempt to perform them was considered null and void.

[3] *Fulgentius: Selected Works*, trans. Robert B. Eno, S.S. (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 258.

[4] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.40, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. James Shaw (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/12022.htm.

[5] Scholarship has testified to its authenticity; see Norman H. Baynes, "Optatus," *Journal of Theological Studies*, volume os-XXVI, issue 101 (October 1924): 37–44, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/os-XXVI.101.37.

Apostle St. Peter is the foundation and genesis of the episcopal priesthood. St. Peter is "head of the apostles (for which reason he was called Cephas),"[6] says St. Optatus. The name Cephas means "rock," and so St. Optatus understood that St. Simon's name was changed to Peter (rock) because the origin of unity has a strength-supporting function. Moreover, the headship given to St. Peter also aligns with this rock-function, which means that the origin of unity is also a *power* or *authority to unify*. St. Peter's Chair is the chair of the head. The originating source of the episcopate is also a subject bearing the power or authority of unification. This concept bears direct relation to the question, *where is the true Church?*

To answer this question, St. Optatus detailed certain possessions with which only the true Church has been endowed by Almighty God. He called them "adornments" or "endowments." These mark or signify the true Church and provide a way for it to be visibly distinguished against false, pseudo-churches. The argument against Parmenian, ultimately, is that the Donatist sect had done certain things that resulted in their severance from these necessary endowments of Christ for his one and only Church, and had thus lost their participation in the Church's unity.

The first endowment is the *cathedra*, or chair, upon which a bishop sits, that is, the bishop's throne. St. Optatus then remarks, "We must see *who* was the first to sit on the Cathedra and *where* he sat."[7] In other words, he was rhetorically asking, for the sake of his reader, *who was the Church's first bishop, and where was he installed?* He goes on:

> You cannot then deny that you do know that upon Peter first in the city of Rome was bestowed the Episcopal *Cathedra*, on which sat Peter, the Head of the Apostles (for which reason he was called *Cephas*), that, *in this one Cathedra, unity should be preserved by all*, lest the other Apostles might claim—each for himself—*separate Cathedras*, so that he who should set up a *second Cathedra against the unique Cathedra* would already be a schismatic and a sinner.[8] Well

[6] Oliver Rodie Vassall-Phillips, trans., *The Works of St. Optatus* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), 34.

[7] Vassall-Phillips, *Works of St. Optatus*, 34.

[8] According to Oxford Professor of Patristics, Mark Edwards, "Optatus obviously accepts the Roman equation of Peter with the see of Rome" (*Optatus: Against the Donatists* [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997], 9). In this passage of Optatus, says Edwards, the "Roman bishopric of Peter *is assumed*," (*Optatus: Against the Donatists*, 32n9 [emphasis added]). Edwards references J. E. Merdinger as essentially agreeing that *cathedra Petri* is the bishopric

> then, on the one Cathedra, which is the first of the endowments, Peter was the first to sit. To Peter succeeded Linus, to Linus succeeded Clement . . . to Liberius succeeded Damasus, to Damasus Siricius, who today is our colleague, *with whom "the whole world," through the intercourse of letters of peace, agrees with us in one bond of communion.*[9]

One can certainly see a parallelism with St. Cyprian, in that both understood St. Peter alone, as opposed to the other Apostles, as the occupant of this singular chair, and that this chair was supposed to function as an origin of unity, the chair from which the emanating multiplicity finds its unity or source. Here, St. Optatus gives more detail. In particular, St. Peter's position carries a certain *bind* upon the other Apostles, such that *they cannot create a chair for themselves.* The chair, therefore, has a restrictive power; that is, it binds all to its singularity. This is a power of restriction, or of unification. All of the Apostles, therefore, had to find their place around the one chair which belonged to St. Peter, and if they decided to forsake that rule, they would already be in the sin of sacrilege and schism. Moreover, this chair is not a mere mystical concept about the priesthood but is concrete, historical, *stationed in the city of Rome,* and outlives its first holder (Peter) by a continuing lineal succession.

In his translation of St. Optatus, Dr. Mark Edwards, adds a commentary which states that the *cathedra Petri* (Chair of Peter) is the Roman

---

of Rome, but Merdinger incorrectly limits Rome's unique role of being principle of unity to the West: "In an effort to emphasize the legitimacy of the Catholic position against the upstart Donatists, Optatus extolled the *cathedra Petri* as the *premier see in the West.* . . . The church at Rome, as guardian of the *memoria Petri,* stood as the foremost symbol of Christian love in the western part of the empire" (J. E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997], 205). See also Merdinger, "Optatus Reconsidered," *Studia Patristica* 22 (December 1989): 294–99. One significant weakness of Merdinger's position is that if the *cathedra Petri* only has a unifying function for the West, where is the *cathedra Petri* for the East? Moreover, what principle unites the Western Chair of Peter and the Eastern Chair of Peter? The whole idea is that St. Peter was given one Chair and for the purpose of depriving the other Apostles of having of a Chair of their own. As soon as we make two Chairs of Peter, the whole logic of its purpose comes crumbling down, and Merdinger's logic suffers from just that fatality. Christopher Butler, the late Anglican scholar and convert to Rome, put it quite right: "It is precisely Optatus of Milevis, in his work against the Donatists, who—among other criteria—makes explicit the doctrine that the Catholic Church is the Church which is in communion with the legitimate bishop of Rome" (*The Idea of the Church* [London: Helicon Press, 1962], 109n10); see also his "St. Augustine's Teaching on Schism," *Downside Review* 69 (January 1951): 137–54.

[9] Vassal-Phillips, The Works of St. Optatus, 34, section 2.3.

bishopric, and implies its unique place of primacy in the real world.[10] This Petrine throne, says St. Optatus, is "first of the endowments" given to Christ's Church. Therefore, what we are speaking about here is something embedded into the very fabric, essence, foundation, and DNA of the true Church. The late Anglican scholar Henry E. Symonds, however much he sought to argue forcefully against the papacy, concedes that the concept that St. Optatus is presenting is a concrete and individuated locus of the Chair of Peter *in the bishopric of the Roman church*:

> In Cyprian's view our Lord gave the keys first to Peter in order to manifest the unity of the Episcopate. He makes no necessary connexion between this gift and the See of Rome. Optatus, however, seems to regard the *cathedra*—i.e., the one Episcopate—as a privilege conferred *in the city of Rome* on Peter first, and passing from him to his successors in that See down to the existing bishop, Siricius. This *cathedra*, says Optatus, is now possessed by the Catholics in Africa and elsewhere *because they are in communion with the occupant of the Roman See.* According to this doctrine, not only was Peter the centre of unity, so to speak, for the Apostles, "who did not claim individual chairs of themselves," *but his successor continues to be the centre of unity for the whole Christian Church.*[11]

The main idea seems obvious. The Roman church is the principle of unity for all the bishops, and from this, wrote the late patristics theologian Joseph Tixeront, echoing Symonds, "St. Optatus inferred that to be outside the Roman communion was just the same as to be outside the Church."[12] The point deserves some scrutiny. The first church was in Jerusalem, and her bishop was St. James, brother of the Lord, not St. Peter. Where does St. Optatus come from with St. Peter and Rome being first? Moreover, St. Peter sat in the church of Antioch before coming to Rome. How then does the chair of the Roman church become one of the Church's first endowments due to the *cathedra* being given to St. Peter there?

---

[10] Edwards, *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, 257n2.

[11] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 99.

[12] Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, vol. 2 (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1923), 303.

Since the chairmanship of St. Peter was not historically tied to his ministry in Rome, to which he traveled years after his initial sermon in Jerusalem, it must be observed that this chair given to St. Peter was not something exclusive for the Roman diocese but was a reality vis-à-vis the other Apostles when Jesus the Lord was still in their presence in the flesh. The chair was given to St. Peter when the Lord performed the *Tu es Petrus* ordination. It was a reality which, according to St. Optatus, the Apostles were bound to adhere to every time they were around their leader. Therefore, even before Peter reaches the city of Rome, he has the headship and chairmanship of the Apostles. St. Optatus mentions this as well: "For the *sake of unity*, blessed Peter . . . both deserved to be *placed over all the Apostles*, and *alone received the keys* of the Kingdom of Heaven, which he was to *communicate to the rest.*"[13] It was on the providential order that St. Peter, the one who egregiously sinned by denying the Lord three times, should be the first to receive the keys and from whom the other Apostles would receive the same.[14]

What it means for St. Peter to be the source of the power of the keys for the other Apostles will serve to provide a definition for the purpose of the chair.[15] By adhering to this chair, one maintains his right and legitimate use of the keys. We know this because St. Optatus elsewhere states, concerning the gates of hell:

> Gates against which we read that *Peter received the keys*—Peter, that is to say, the first of our line, to whom it was said by Christ: "To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and these keys the gates of hell shall not overcome. How is it, then, that you *strive to usurp for yourselves the keys* of the kingdom of heaven, you who, with your arguments, and audacious sacrilege, *war against the chair of Peter.*[16]

---

[13] Vassall-Phillips, *Works of St. Optatus*, 108.

[14] Vassall-Phillips, *Works of St. Optatus*, 108. The idea is that Peter, being the one who needed guilt remitted, was also the head and key-holder of the Apostles, and so even the presence of guilt should not move anyone to break communion, since the Apostles, if they would have broken communion with Peter, would have forfeited their place in the priesthood.

[15] In Catholic theology, a certain nuance exists which St. Optatus did not give treatment to, namely, that the bishops in the episcopate do not receive their power and jurisdiction from the pope but directly from Jesus Christ by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. However, the proper exercise of jurisdiction depends on their unity with the See of St. Peter. This nuance doesn't change the Optatian function that is being looked at here.

[16] Vassall-Phillips, *Works of St. Optatus*, 35.

The logic here is quite simple: St. Peter received the keys with which to bind and loose. Those who war against St. Peter's Chair cannot hope to share in the power of those keys since that chair is a source of legitimate key usage. Therefore, attempting to bind and loose outside of union with Rome is tantamount to usurping the power from the original lawful recipient, St. Peter. By waging war against the Chair of Peter, the Donatists "usurp" for themselves the authority of the keys, which is the only means through which to conduct the Christian priesthood. It would stand to reason, therefore, that it is by maintaining peace and communion with the Chair of Peter alone that can one lawfully and legitimately have the power of the keys. And since St. Optatus tells us that it was from St. Peter that the keys were communicated to the rest of the Apostles, then St. Peter's Chair has to be a reality in the Apostolic College as the Lord Jesus Christ created it, and not dependent upon Peter's entrance into the Roman church years later.

Furthermore, he states that in this chair "unity should be preserved by all," which shows that this relation of St. Peter is equal to the Cyprianic logic of an originating principle for the Church, only St. Optatus applied the principle beyond the local context to the universal. This is why he said St. Peter is the first of "our line," whereas he was a bishop of the See of Milevis in North Africa. If St. Peter's occupation in Rome was significant *only for the church of Rome*, how could a North African identify St. Peter as the first of "his" line? There is no African mission conducted by St. Peter. It could only be if St. Peter's Chair represented a universally embracing office that would enable him to make such an identification. This would also mean that the Petrine chair has this universal function of being the principle of unity wherever St. Peter is, and that would hold true for when he was in Jerusalem, Antioch, or Rome.[17] But since he finished his mission in Rome, that is where the prerogatives of his office get permanently stationed. The scholarship acknowledging this is widespread.

Dr. Siecienski acknowledged the argument when he summarized the Optatian principle of unity as the "church's catholicity and the 'single fellowship of communion' enjoyed by *all the churches* joined with the *Church of Rome*."[18] Communion with Rome, says Fr. Ludwig Hertling,

[17] Why Jerusalem, Antioch, or any other see where St. Peter was did not retain the full Petrine prerogatives is explained simply by the fact that St. Peter left and took with his person those prerogatives. He kept them with his person, which means the last episcopate where he ruled would be the only place for those prerogatives to be inherited, i.e., the Roman church.

[18] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New

"was simply *the* communion and a church not sharing that communion was simply not acknowledged."[19] Rome is the "center of communion" through whom the "intercourse of letters" the whole world finds its link with the true Church.[20] "It was the Roman view, as remarked by Batiffol, that 'you are not in communion with the Catholica, unless you are in communion with Rome.'"[21] Once again, according to Dr. Mark Edwards, Optatus makes "communion with Rome the test of a valid priesthood."[22] J. N. D. Kelly, one of the foremost Anglican patristic scholars of the twentieth century, interpreted St. Optatus as teaching the fundamental unity of the whole Church has its "visible manifestation" consisting of "communion with the see of Peter."[23] Now, speaking directly to his book against Parmenian, Kelly reads St. Optatus as having reckoned "the chair of Peter as one of the indispensable possessions of the true Church: *claves ... solus Petrus accepit*."[24] He goes on to say that, for St. Optatus, "communion with the see of Peter was a vital necessity."[25] The late Dr. Adolf Von

York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 123.

[19] Ludwig Hertling, S.J., *Communio: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1972), 56.

[20] Ludwig Hertling, *A History of the Catholic Church* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1956), 40. For more on this matter of the *cathedra Petri* in Rome being the principle of unity and how it ties to papal authority and infallibility, see Erick Ybarra's "The Roots of the Papacy: The Patristic Logic," *Academia.edu* (November 2021) https://www.academia.edu/50040213/The_Roots_of_the_Papacy_The_Patristic_Logic.

[21] B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church*, 84–85; Butler cites from Batiffol's *Le Siége Apostolique* (Paris, 1924), 606.

[22] Mark Edwards, "Early Ecclesiology in the West," in *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Paul Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 175; contra Edwards, the Catholic Church would not say that the Donatists had an *invalid* priesthood but an *illegitimate* priesthood, since it retains validity but has no legitimate authority for its use. In one other important study on the Donatist controversy, G. G. Willis describes unity with the Roman bishopric as one of the tests of catholicity for the African Church (*Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* [London: SPCK, 1950], 24). This would at least furnish a significant amount of unbiased scholarship recognizing the unique position of Rome in relationship to the Church at large, if not the universal Church. What seems least likely is the interpretation which sees St. Optatus merely drawing significance from St. Peter in Rome to Rome only. This is the interpretation of those who suggest that St. Optatus is simply bringing Rome into the picture in order to show that the Donatist occupant of Rome has no licensed pedigree nor lawful credentials to be the legitimate bishop of Rome. That is far too minor a point to make it the overall argument.

[23] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, revised ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 412. See also Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 279–80.

[24] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 418.

[25] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 419. We know that Kelly means the Roman See by "Chair of Peter" since after this comment, he continues: "Although we should note that

Harnack (1851–1930), a prominent German historical theologian, who was known for his critical and liberal methodology in the study of early Christianity, makes the following observation about Augustine's view of Rome in light of the Optatian principle:

> Augustine maintained the theory of Cyprian and Optatus regarding Peter's chair: it was occupied by the Roman Bishop and it was necessary to be in accord with it, because it was the apostolic seat par excellence, i.e., the bearer of the doctrinal authority and unity of the Church.[26]

Fr. Robert Eno, who himself leans toward reading both St. Cyprian and St. Optatus as having a more localized sense, where each bishop functions as the Peter to his flock, admits that more is apparent from the enlistment of bishops in the Roman bishopric.[27] Consequently, Fr. Eno notes that St. Peter's Chair here is the Roman bishopric, and it has universal significance.[28] Even the great Protestant historian Philip Schaff gives the following synopsis of Optatian thought on the matter:

> Optatus . . . is, like Cyprian, thoroughly possessed with the idea of the visible unity of the Church . . . and sees its plastic expression and its surest safeguard in the immovable *cathedra Petri*, the prince of the Apostles, the keeper of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, who, in spite of his denial of Christ, continued in that relation to the other apostles, that the unity of the Church might appear in outward fact as

---

he laid almost equal stress on the desirability of communion with the Oriental churches and what he called the *septiformis ecclesia Asiae*" (419). Thus, when Kelly refers to "Chair of Peter," he does not mean to refer to all bishops equally.

[26] Adolf Von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 5, trans. and ed. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1899), 150. Harnack takes St. Cyprian at his word when he referred to Rome as the "Chair of Peter" and the "Principal Church," which would logically entail the Optatian principle. St. Cyprian never came that far in the logic of the scheme. During the same era, distinguished professor of history Alexander C. Flick, in his *The Rise of the Medieval Church* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), stated that St. Optatus "strongly asserted the visible unity of the Church and the immovable *Cathedra Petri*, with the Roman Bishop as Peter's successor" (169–70).

[27] Robert Eno, "The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, vol. 37, n. 4 (October 1973), 683.

[28] Eno, "The Work of Optatus," 684–85; see also Robert Eno, "The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic," *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 47, n. 2 (June 1993), 158–69.

> an unchangeable thing, invulnerable to human offence. *All these prerogatives have passed to the bishops of Rome.*[29]

St. Optatus takes it for granted that the Donatists were aware of this universal requirement of unity with St. Peter, and so he describes how they sought to secure a line of bishops in Rome in order for them to retain this universally validating endowment: "But you allege that you too have some sort of a party in the city of Rome."[30] This "connection with Rome with Peter's chair was of decisive importance, not only for Optatus, but also for his opponent (2.4), who had appealed to the fact that Donatists had also possessed a bishop in Rome."[31] In other words, the idea here is that the Donatists knew that having a link to the Petrine Chair in Rome was necessary, and so they artificially secured it with a new line of bishops beginning from a certain Victor of Garba, who made a "new Episcopate" (i.e., new Chair) against the already existing bishop of Rome.[32] Thus, the Donatists were disqualified. As summed up by J. Patout Burns, Jr., St. Optatus "disputed Parmenian's claim that the Donatist church held episcopal authority (*cathedra*), because its episcopate did not derive from or maintain unity with the historic college of bishops founded upon the apostles and, in particular, with the *cathedra* of the chief of the apostles, Peter, established in Rome."[33]

In recent history, some Anglicans and Orthodox have attempted to read St. Optatus entirely differently than described above. They say that, like St. Cyprian, all that Optatus had in mind was the common inheritance of the Chair of Peter by all bishops everywhere in the world, and that each city has a certain "first bishop" who is the one from whom the rest must lawfully succeed. Since the Donatists had attempted to plant a church in Rome, all St. Optatus was doing, in this reading, was showing that it was a coincidence that the historical Peter was the first to sit in

---

[29] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, AD 311–600* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1884), 303–04.

[30] Vassall-Phillips, *Works of St. Optatus*, 34.

[31] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 5, 47.

[32] According to Frend, the Bishops of Rome were "indispensable." The See of Peter "was acknowledged in the West as the source of episcopal unity." This grounds the desire of the Donatists seeking to find someone to "represent Peter in Rome," and Victor of Garba would be that man, so that "through him communion with Rome could be maintained" (W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 1984], 357).

[33] J. Patout Burns Jr., "The Holiness of the Church in North African Theology," in *The Hermeneutics of Tradition: Explorations and Examinations*, eds. Craig Hovey and Cyrus P. Olsen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 88.

the true and authentic Roman bishopric, as opposed to their line from the usurping Donatist bishop, Victor of Garba. But this view is militated against by the fact that when St. Optatus introduced the endowments, he was speaking to the universal endowments for the whole Church universal, and did not, without forewarning, launch into a particular dispute in the Roman church between the authentic episcopate and the Donatist parties then existing. Such was out of concert with his overall thought process. As Fr. Adrian Fortescue remarked, "There is nothing in this about rival claimants to Peter's see [in the Roman locale]. His point is that Christ made Peter's throne the centre of Catholic unity, so that not even another Apostle (much less a later bishop) was to set up his throne, that is use his authority, in opposition to the throne of Peter."[34]

On top of this, when St. Optatus described his own place of being in the true Church, he claimed it in the following manner: "So, of the above-mentioned endowments, the Cathedra is, as we have said, the first, which we have proved *to be ours, through Peter*."[35] By using the word "ours," he proved Roman *cathedra* is the universal *cathedra* of St. Peter. If it were the case that St. Peter's occupation in Rome simply had significance for the Roman succession overshadowing the Donatist succession, St. Optatus, a North African, couldn't possibly trace the possession of the Milevian *cathedra* back to St. Peter the man himself. Otherwise, St. Optatus would have had to say that his proof of being in the true Church would simply be to recite the name of the *first bishop of Milevis*. The first bishop of Milevis would have marked the sufficient Petrine pedigree of Milevis, not St. Peter the man, who never, so far as we know, stepped foot in Africa.

Historically, the lineage of Parmenian begins with Majorinus, who usurped chair of Caecilian, who himself had the Chair of Peter, like St. Optatus, through the "intercourse of letters" *with Rome*. From Majorinus succeeded Donatus, and then Parmenian. Therefore, they created a new *cathedra* instead of adhering to the original *cathedra*, whose principle of unity came from the historical Peter in Rome. As St. Cyprian ironically wrote, the Roman See is the place from which "the unity of the priesthood took its rise." In a sort of climax, St. Optatus described the Donatists as "boughs broken off from the tree . . . branches cut off from the vine . . . a river separated from its source."[36] The Cyprianic imagery is unmistakable. For St. Optatus, it had been shown that, "through the

[34] Adrian Fortescue, *Donatism* (London: Burns & Oates, 1917), 34.

[35] Vassall-Phillips, *Works of St. Optatus*, 36.

[36] Ibid., 2.9.

chair of Peter, which is ours—*through it*—the other endowments also belong to us."[37] In other words, the full equipment to conduct the Christian ministry comes through unity with the Chair of Peter in Rome. In conclusion, he told Parmenian that he had successfully shown where the true Church is, namely, that it "is scattered over the whole world" and that "of this holy Church there has been constituted *a representative*."[38] That representative (singular) is the bishop of Rome, the one who succeeds the actual Apostle Peter.[39] This interpretation is corroborated by great Saints such Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.

## St. Augustine and the Cathedra Petri (354–430)

Against the Donatists, St. Augustine gives the Optatian principle as *sine qua non*:

> Why! A faggot[40] that is *cut off from the vine* retains its shape. But what use is that shape, if it is not living from the root? Come, brothers, if you wish to be engrafted in the vine. It is grievous when we see you thus lying cut off. Number the priests even from that *seat of Peter*. And in that order of fathers see who to whom succeeded: *that is the rock which the proud gates of hades do not conquer*.[41]

Undoubtedly, the "vine" of unity is St. Peter's Seat and being engrafted means to be in communion with it. But perhaps by "seat of Peter," he means any bishop? Is that what St. Augustine is saying? Is there evidence that militates against this? Yes. In another place, he writes:

> What has the chair done to you of the *Roman Church*, in which *Peter sat*, and which *Anastasius fills today*; or the chair of the Church of Jerusalem, in which James once sat?[42]

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] See also Bryan Cross, "St. Optatus on Schism and the Bishop of Rome," *Called to Communion*, June 1, 2011, https://www.calledtocommunion.com/2011/06/st-optatus-on-schism-and-the-bishop-of-rome/.

[40] A dismembered branch.

[41] "Psalmus contra Partem Donati," *PL* 43.30, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 182.

[42] Augustine, *Answer to Petilian the Donatist* 2.51.118, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J.R. King and rev. by Chester D. Hartranft (Buffalo,

In one particular epistle to a certain layman Generosus residing in Constantina, Numidia, St. Augustine not only shows that the episcopal line of St. Peter is specifically the Roman bishops but also encapsulates the argument of St. Optatus in a nutshell. After rehearsing the *Tu es Petrus*, he follows with:

> For if the lineal succession of bishops is to be taken into account, with how much more certainty and benefit to the Church do we reckon back till we reach Peter himself, to whom, as bearing in a figure the whole Church, the Lord said: Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it! The successor of Peter was Linus, and his successors in unbroken continuity were these:—Clement, Anacletus, et al., . . . whose successor is the present Bishop Anastasius. In this order of succession no Donatist bishop is found. But, reversing the natural course of things, the Donatists sent to Rome from Africa an ordained bishop, who, putting himself at the head of a few Africans in the great metropolis, gave some notoriety to the name of mountain men, or Cutzupits, by which they were known.[43]

Generosus had been troubled by the Donatists in his city urging him to convert to their episcopate. St. Augustine responded in an effort to invalidate their episcopal succession as alien from the Church by showing that, in the city of Rome, where the rock [Peter] of the universal Church sat in the *cathedra*, there was no Donatist line. Therefore, the only bishops who count were those who were in communion with St. Peter's actual *cathedral* lineage in Rome. The argument here will have to be taken in two pieces.

First, St. Augustine noted how, if the apostolic succession of bishops is to be studied in its origin, the succession of Roman bishops is the principle of identification. This demonstrates that a recounting of the Roman succession was not geared for an internal division between Donatists in Rome (i.e., Victor of Garba and his successors) and the true Roman episcopate, but rather was a sort of *standardized succession*

NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14092.htm.

[43] Augustine, Letter 53 (A.D. 400), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. G. Cunningham (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102053.htm.

by which all successions were to be judged. Any and all who claim the title "bishop" but who can't compare and unite with the authentic line of St. Peter in Rome are simply illegitimate. That was the argument that St. Augustine was using to convince Generosus of the illegitimate claims of his Donatist neighbors, who themselves had otherwise nothing to do with the city of Rome.

Secondly, the Roman succession gets its ability to offer certainty and benefit to the whole Church because its first bishop was St. Peter, to whom the Lord gave certain enduring promises. In particular, the promise of being the foundation rock upon which the true Church of Christ is built. This was further confirmed in St. Augustine's epistle against Manichaeus, where he gave his reasons for why he was Catholic. Besides the fact that the Catholic Church has the consent of nations, possesses authority, has the pedigree of miracles, is nourished by hope and love, and has stood from antiquity, St. Augustine gives the following anchor for his faith:

> The succession of priests keeps me, *beginning from the very seat of the Apostle Peter*, to whom the Lord, after His resurrection, gave it in *charge to feed His sheep*, down to the present episcopate.[44]

If there were still lingering doubts as to whether St. Augustine thought the Roman episcopate to be unique to all other episcopates, he makes a clear contrast between the chair of Carthage, which was a primatial see in North Africa, and the chair of Rome:

> I suppose there is no slight to Cyprian in comparing him with the apostle Peter in respect of his crown of martyrdom; rather I ought to be afraid lest I am slighting Peter. Who can be ignorant that the *chief apostolate is to be preferred to any episcopate*? But even if the *dignity of their sees differs*, the glory of martyrdom is one.[45]

---

[44] Augustine, *Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichaeus* 4.5, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Richard Stothert (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1405.htm.

[45] Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 2.1, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. R. King and rev. by Chester D. Hartranft (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14082.htm.

The argument here is straightforward. Both Sts. Cyprian and Peter were one and the same when it comes to their manner of giving testimony to Christ by their martyrdom. However, St. Peter was given the "chief apostolate," which is the Roman apostolate, and therefore his "see" is to be superior to all others, even St. Cyprian's (Carthage). This is significant because St. Augustine might be read by the Orthodox with a strong Cyprianic fundamentalism, where each bishop, be he the bishop of Rome or Carthage, occupies the single-same Chair of Peter in just the same way. Clearly, this can't be deduced from St. Augustine. As was shown above, J. N. D. Kelly understood St. Optatus to equate the Chair of Peter with the Roman bishopric. In the same vein, Kelly interprets St. Augustine as also holding the Church's "centre at Rome"[46] as well as attributing "to the Pope a pastoral and teaching authority extending over the whole Church, and found a basis for it in Scripture."[47]

Some readers of St. Augustine have attempted to point to one peculiar section of his work in which he states that if the Donatists were not satisfied with the judgment rendered for their case by the judges at the Roman Synod (313), they could appeal to a "plenary Council of the universal Church, in which these judges themselves might be put on their defense; so that, if they were convicted of mistake, their decisions might be reversed."[48] Doesn't this entail that, for St. Augustine, the papal court at Rome is inferior and accountable to the judgment of an ecumenical council? This is an important question, and unfortunately the Augustinian corpus isn't replete with consistency, leading some to admit that St. Augustine "never worked out his Conciliar theory."[49]

Later in his life, particularly during the Pelagian controversy, we see a growing awareness in St. Augustine of the essential authority of the Apostolic See. For example, he considered the judgment of Pope St. Innocent I against the Pelagians as absolutely final.[50] This comes out in his reply to Julian of Eclanum, who wanted to reopen the debate on Pelagianism:[51] "'You [Julian],' retorts Augustine, 'seek an examination *already*

[46] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 413.

[47] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 419. However, Kelly also notes that he doesn't see in Augustine any evidence of an infallible Roman magisterium.

[48] Augustine, Letter 43 (A.D. 397), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. by J. G. Cunningham (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102043.htm.

[49] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 110.

[50] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 107.

[51] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 111.

*undertaken by the Apostolic See.*"[52] As below expositions will demonstrate, St. Augustine accepted the idea that required all councils to be first ratified by the Apostolic See before they were considered finally settled. So on one hand, St. Augustine said the Donatists could petition their case to a plenary council in order to further examine their case and possibly reverse the Roman judgment. On the other hand, he forbade Julian of Eclanum from petitioning his case to further examination because the judgment of Rome had settled it.[53] While the Donatists may have had room to further petition their case, St. Augustine does not understand this further examination to be conducted *without the authority of Rome.* St. Robert Bellarmine sufficiently explains this point:

> To that about a general Council, I say Augustine did not discuss a Pope without a Council so as to support a Council without a Pope.... Rather he discusses a particular Council over which the Pope would preside, then a General Council, over which also the Pope would preside. Moreover, there can be no doubt that a case judged by the Pope in a particular Council can again be judged by the same in a general Council, especially in a question of fact, which depends upon information and in which the Church can err, such as the question was that was being argued then. Nay more, even ordinarily, after a general Council has been summoned, if formerly there were particular Councils held earlier in individual provinces— even at Rome, and later the matter which was treated in those particular Councils was defined in a general Council, then the final judgment and definitive sentence of the Roman Pontiff with the assent of a Council is imposed.[54]

[52] *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* 2.103, in "Patristic Testimonies on Peter, Bishop of the Church of Rome," trans. Vittorino Grossi, in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Cardinal Walter Kasper (New York: The Newman Press, 2006), 100.

[53] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 111.

[54] Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Tomus II*, vol. 1, *On the Church: On Councils, On the Church Militant, On the Marks of the Church*, trans. Ryan Grant (Post Fall, ID: Mediatrix Press, 2017), 216.

## Pope St. Siricius (384–399): Papal Decretals

The first pope of whose decretals we have considerable documentary evidence is Pope St. Siricius (384–399), whose feast for both Catholics and Orthodox is November 26. They are addressed to Western churches throughout Spain, Italy, and Africa.[55] One of the more outstanding decretals was sent to a certain bishop of Tarragona, Himerius. The bishop had sent a document, which reached Rome and had reports of abuse and disorder in Spanish churches. Himerius was seeking answers from Rome on what to do.

Before looking at some of its content, it is important to observe that at this time, the patriarchal jurisdiction of Rome did not extend beyond the suburbicarian provinces (central and southern Italy). The only addition to this was the newly made papal vicariate created in Thessalonica to oversee affairs in Illyria after certain political changes took place, putting the latter under Eastern territory.[56] Therefore, the content of St. Siricius's letter is for churches not under his patriarchate.[57]

Since well before the late fourth century, St. Siricius's "predecessors had acted primarily as a court of appeal," but now the pope was seen taking it on himself to "issue official letters in response to problems elsewhere in the Church" and to "send out directives he considered binding on the churches"[58] and "equal to conciliar decrees."[59] In the pope's decretal to Himerius, there contained certain "provisions" which went "behind the local bishop and metropolitan altogether and [established] relations by its own authority directly with the lesser clergy, monks, and laity of these distant regions."[60] In the opening of the letter, St. Siricius gave the main motivation for his responding with authoritative stipulations:

---

[55] Beresford Kidd, *The Roman Primacy: To A.D. 461* (London: The MacMillan Publishing Company, 1936), 73–74. There are no letters known of St. Siricius to Illyria.

[56] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 36.

[57] Referring to St. Siricius's time (384), it is far too anachronistic to speak of "patriarchate." Thus what is meant here is simply the supra-metropolitical oversight of the Roman See that stretched beyond the city of Rome by this time at the end of the fourth century.

[58] Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 167; W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 220.

[59] Detlev Jasper and Horst Fuhrmann, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 4.

[60] Shotwell and Loomis, eds., *The See of Peter* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 698.

> We bear the burden of *all* who are heavy laden, or rather the blessed Apostle Peter bears them in us, who in all things, as we trust, protects and defends those who are *heirs to his government*.[61]

The Roman bishops, who are successors to St. Peter, are heirs to his government, and thus they bear the burden to care for the universal Church. This could only be if St. Peter were divinely appointed to govern the universal Church, a privilege which descends to his successors. One observation worthy of note is the pope's use of the word *haeres* (heirs), which means he, like his successor St. Leo would seventy years later, utilized a Roman law concept to communicate the position of the bishop of Rome. Just as an "heir enters into the rights of the deceased, the Roman bishop succeeds those of Peter" and, as such, "he is the sole heir (*haeres*), the holder of his authority and of the promise of Matthew 16:18–19."[62] Sensing his responsibility to care for the Lord's people, the pope attended to his duties with a response. Concerning the improper practice of rebaptizing converts who come from sects that had validly baptized, St. Siricius warned that they must conform to the Roman practice of not rebaptizing, or else face detrimental consequences:

> You too henceforth ought not to deviate from this path, if you do not wish to be cut off from our college by sentence of our synod.[63]

After reviewing other disciplinary matters, he added another warning that, if unheeded, would have resulted in being "plucked from the solid, apostolic rock upon which Christ built the universal Church."[64] For disobedience to other commands, the pope stated:

> Let them understand that they are deposed by [the] authority of the Apostolic See from every ecclesiastical position which they have abused.[65]

---

[61] *PL* 13.1132, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 142.

[62] Christian Hornung, "Siricius and the Rise of the Papacy," in *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, ed. Geoffrey D. Dunn (London: Routledge, 2016), 64.

[63] Siricius, "Epistolae 1," To Himerius, in C. T. G. Schönemann, *Pontificum Romanorum Epistolae Genuinae*, 408–16, quoted in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 700.

[64] Siricius, "Epistolae 1," in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 701.

[65] Siricius, "Epistolae 1," in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 704.

And this rule was said to be promulgated by a "decree" that "must henceforth be observed by all the churches and what must be avoided."[66] Toward the end, the pope explains how his letter provided "adequate answers to each of the cases" which Himerius "reported by our son, the priest Bassianus, to the Roman church *as to the head of your body*."[67] The decrees of St. Siricius were to be sent out to Africa, Gaul, and Spain because "no priest of the Lord is free to be ignorant of the statutes of the Apostolic See."[68]

A clear testimony to the claims of universal jurisdiction on the ground of being the "heir" of Peter's "government," the "head" of all the churches, and whose judgments can result in binding excommunication if not adhered to. The several rules laid down for under clergy clearly show that St. Siricius felt his decision surpassed that of the will of the metropolitans and bishops who were immediately in charge of them. J. N. D. Kelly describes this letter in much the same way: "He was the first pope to issue decretals, i.e., directives couched in the authoritative chancery style of imperial edicts and, like them, carrying the force of law."[69]

No indication of any mediatorial acceptance on the part of the intervening clergy is given. St. Siricius also taught that the "apostolate" and "episcopate" took their origin in Peter,[70] which harkens back to Cyprianic conception, only brought to its proper logical conclusion of having a universal power of unification on matters of discipline. In a letter to North Africa, he ordered that no bishops should be ordained without the knowledge of the bishop of Rome, and "refusal to obey would bring not only excommunication by Rome but the fires of hell in the next life."[71]

Some Orthodox readers might observe that either St. Siricius was simply wrong or that he was simply acting appropriately as the *patriarch of the West* (making decisions while assembled in a synod). The first option is entirely possible, though it should be recognized that he is corroborated by the long-standing tradition of his predecessors, many

---

[66] Siricius, "Epistolae 1," in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 705. The churches in Africa, Spain, and Gaul, see Siricius, "Epistolae 1," in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 707.

[67] Siricius, "Epistolae 1," in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 707.

[68] Siricius, "Epistolae 1," in *The See of Peter*, eds. Shotwell and Loomis, 707.

[69] J. N. D. Kelly, "Siricius," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 35.

[70] St. Siricius, Epistle 5, *PL* 13.1155–62, in *The Roman Primacy*, by Kidd, 75.

[71] Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1990), 90. Eno takes from Siricius, Epistle 5.4; W. H. C. Frend, "The Origins of the Papacy," in *The Papacy*, eds. Paul Johnson and Michael Walsh (London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997), 38.

of whom are venerated in the Orthodox calendar of saints. St. Siricius showed he "had no sense that he was inventing anything, as his references to the 'general decrees' of his predecessors show: it may be that this form of reply to enquiries had already become routine."[72]

The second option (that these were just synodal judgments) is far more unlikely. Firstly, the letter to Himerius shows remarkable examples of disciplinary punishments that are aimed at the under clergy of metropolitans and bishops, presumably not needing the permission of the latter. Even if the judgments of St. Siricius proceeded from the context of a Roman synod, there was no synod of a particular church that had the power to enact discipline over a deacon or priest in another church afar off from itself without the prior approval of their bishops. Therefore, something gave this Roman synod the muscle to do this, in the mind of St. Siricius. What could that be? It would obviously be his station of being "heir" to Peter's government, which involves having the care of all the churches. If it is succession to Peter's government that gives the Roman synod the muscle to enact such juridical laws to all the churches, then even the Roman synod is a recipient of the investment of this primacy given by Christ to Peter and his lineal successors. Moreover, in Orthodox polity, a regional synod headed by a metropolitan or patriarch doesn't logically require any inheritance from St. Peter's primacy but draws from the canonical constitutions of the Church. St. Siricius was speaking of something far more unique, specific, and historically grounded in succession from the historical Peter, to whom was given special prerogatives in relation to the universal sheep of Christ.

## Pope St. Boniface I (418–422): Petrine Head and Members

Explicit testimony on the divine origin of the papal primacy in the early fifth century comes from Pope St. Boniface I. The setting for this is in a series of letter exchanges that took place after the newly established ecclesiastical situation in the peninsula of Illyricum. The city of Thessalonica had been raised, for socio-political reasons, to metropolitical status over Illyricum.[73] Under St. Siricius, the bishop of Thessalonica was therefore elevated to have metropolitical jurisdiction over all Illyricum.

[72] Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, third ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 40.

[73] For a wonderful summary, from which I derived a great deal, see Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 272–78.

As time went forward, the bishop of Rome would establish the bishop of Thessalonica as a sort of *papal vicariate*, representing the authority of the Apostolic See on behalf of the popes. With this organization, the papal vicar in Thessalonica would normally handle matters of great cause, but ultimately would leave final arbitration for Rome. However, the churches of Eastern Illyricum were to become politically under the secular administration of Constantinople, and this caused tension over whether Rome or Constantinople should administer the ecclesiastical affairs in the region. Under Emperor Theodosius II, it was decreed that matters of greater cause should be referred to the bishop of Constantinople since the latter had acquired the "privileges of ancient Rome."[74] This claim would prove to be rejected by Rome, and one scenario serves as an example. When there had come to be a disputed election in the church of Corinth for its metropolitan, motions were made toward Constantinople, rather than Rome, for arbitration. St. Boniface responded to this attempt on the part of Constantinople by reminding the Easterners that the churches of Alexandria and Antioch were the only sees of the East with *supra-diocesan privileges*. The Alexandrine church was the second see of Christendom, and that, only after the Roman church. After Alexandria, the Antiochene church was third in the taxis (order). Therefore, Constantinople was taking to herself novel prerogatives hitherto unknown and devoid of canonical precedence. In the process of this argumentation, the pope also revealed certain beliefs which demonstrated the Roman view of its own authority by the early fifth century:

> Since the occasion demands it, if you will please examine Canon Law, you will find what is the second see after the Roman church and what is the third. This group (of sees) has been *canonically set apart*, so that the bishops of other churches, *though sharing one and the same episcopal status*, may realize that there are those to whom they *ought to be obedient* in a bond of love for the sake of ecclesiastical discipline. . . . None has ever been so rash as to oppose the apostolic primacy, *the judgment of which may not be revised; none rebels against it, unless he would be judged in his turn.*[75]

[74] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 275.

[75] Boniface, Epistle 15, To Rufus and the other Bishops of Macedonia, *PL* 20.782, in *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 276; see also E. Giles, *Documents*, 230. This explanation on the part of the pope perhaps also explains why it was that Pope St. Julius understood that Alexandria was

Constantinople thus must abide by the primacies of Alexandria and Antioch, but especially the bishop of Rome as the primate and chief at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. St. Boniface made an appeal to canon law, as if the three primatial sees originated their privileges from a conciliar legislation. If St. Boniface had said nothing else about the question of Rome's primacy and its relation to the canonical constitutions, one might reasonably infer that St. Boniface thought Rome's primacy originated, contrary to his predecessor St. Damasus (384), purely from the conciliar decrees of the Church rather than directly (and immediately) from the Lord when he was in the flesh (*Tu es Petrus*). In one other epistle to the bishops of Thessalonica, still on the same subject, he was more explicit about the nature of the Roman primacy, and it serves to provide more clarity. Here, the context was still the Corinthian situation. Here was made the claim that "Peter's church is supreme over all and that no one can be a Christian who is not in communion with Rome."[76]

> The universal ordering of the Church at its *birth* took its *origin* from the *office of blessed Peter,*[77] in which is found both its *directing power and its supreme authority.* From him *as from a source,* at the time when our religion was in a stage of growth, *all churches* received their common order. This much is shown by the injunctions of the council of Nicaea, *since it did not venture to make a decree in his regard, recognizing that nothing could be added to his dignity: in fact it knew that all had been assigned to him by the word of the Lord.* So it is clear that this church is to all churches throughout the world as the *head is to the members,* and that whoever separates himself from it becomes an exile from the Christian religion, *since he ceases to belong to its fellowship.*[78]

uniquely judged by Rome, since Alexandria herself could serve as a judge for lesser sees in the East.

[76] Henry Chadwick, "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea," in *Henry Chadwick: Selected Writings*, ed. William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 79. Though unlikely, Pope St. Boniface could have been working with a translation of the sixth canon of Nicaea. For a history of the scholarly criticism of the Roman version of the sixth canon, see Chadwick, "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Rusch, 71–82.

[77] Again, this harkens back to the Chair of Peter, e.g., Cyprian, Stephen, Optatus, Jerome, Augustine, as the "fount" or "beginning" of the episcopate.

[78] Boniface, Epistle 14, *PL* 20.777 B, in *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 276. Latin text: "Institutio universalis nascentis ecclesiae de beati Petri sumpsit honore principium, in quo regimen

If we may synthesize the thought of St. Boniface by taking the two citations provided, we get the following results. The See of Constantinople was usurping prerogatives that did not belong to her. Three churches of the *oikumene* alone were canonically set apart with such prerogatives: Rome, Alexandra, and Antioch. The nature of their primacies required a certain "obedience" in the "bond of love" for the sake of ecclesiastical order and unity. Though the Council of Nicaea (325) speaks of prerogatives to be assigned to the sees of Alexandria and Antioch, nothing was assigned to See of Rome. The council and the Fathers understood that nothing could be added to the prerogatives of the Roman See because it had been universally known that "all" had been invested in St. Peter by the word of the Lord. Consequently, St. Peter's See (Rome) is the head of all the churches, and the see to which all must submit in obedience for the sake of love and discipline. The office of Peter is not a canonically created organ of the Church, but stretches back to the Church's "birth" and is the "source" of ecclesiastical unity for "all the Churches." The canons which speak to Roman primacy are therefore reflective of an already existing institution by divine or apostolic right and are not causative or a novel introduction *ex nihilo* or from canonical origin.

With that said, we certainly know from other statements by some of St. Boniface's predecessors that the Church did her due diligence in organizing discipline and canonical law to reflect the pre-conciliar reality stretching back to the Lord and the Apostles. Canons regulating the office of bishop or presbyter do not indicate that these offices originated from canons. Both Catholics and Orthodox believe God created these offices during the era of divine Revelation with the Apostles. In any case, what cannot be missed is that St. Boniface singled out the Roman See as inheriting a certain special investment given by the Lord himself to St. Peter, and this marks her as unique from not just all the churches *but also signifies that her primatial nature is distinct from the primacy of the Alexandrine and Antiochene churches.*

Further clarity on this came in the form of another epistle. Pope St. Boniface says that the successors of St. Peter were "under obligation to

eius et summa consistit. Ex eius enim ecclesiastica disciplina per omnes ecclesias, religionis iam crescente cultura, fonte manauit. Nicaenae synodi non aliud praecepta testantur, adeo ut non aliquid super eum ausa sit constituere, cum uideret nihil supra meritm suum posse conferri; omnia Denique huic nouerat domini sermone concessa. Hunc ergo ecclesiis toto orbe diffuses uelut caput suorum certum est esse membrorum; a quo se quisquis abscidit, fit christianae religionis extorris, cum in eadem non coeperit esse compage" (as cited in Chadwick, "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Rusch, 79n50).

be responsible for all, to whom *Christ assigned* the duty of universal stewardship in the holy Apostle Peter, *when He gave to him the keys of opening and closing*."[79] Here was an unmistakable claim that the giving of the "keys" to St. Peter was a universal assignment of primatial government to all Christians, which the popes had no choice but to obey. Therefore, Rome's primacy originates, as St. Damasus made clear in 384, in the "voice" of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This was built from divine and apostolic foundations, as opposed to the city-church of Constantinople. J. N. D. Kelly notes how St. Boniface was "indefatigable in promoting the claims of the papacy, and once wrote, '*It has never been lawful for what has once been decided by the apostolic see to be reconsidered.*'"[80]

[79] Celestine, Epistle 3, as quoted in, *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 277. See the comment on 276 for the scholarly correction to seeing this epistle as from St. Celestine. The true author is likely St. Boniface.

[80] J. N. D. Kelly, "Boniface I," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 41. Kelly cites from Letter 13 in St. Boniface's epistolary, in *PL* 20.776; for fuller quote, see E. Giles, *Documents*, 229.

*Chapter Eleven*

# The Fifth-Century Papacy in North Africa*

## Pelagianism and the African Councils (411–419)

The controversy which concerned the nature of grace came about through influence of a certain Pelagius and his disciple Celestius. This occurrence afforded an opportunity for Rome to manifest her doctrinal supremacy since it was she who was consulted by all the parties involved, including Catholic and Orthodox saints. Pelagius, whose doctrine emphasized far too much the priority of free will and human capability in the attainment of salvation, merited the attention of orthodox bishops in North Africa, St. Augustine in particular. While Pelagius was born in the West and resided for a time in both Rome and Carthage, he made his way eventually to Egypt and Palestine. His disciple and accomplice, Celestius, remained in Africa and faced counter measures for his doctrine. Upon facing conciliar discipline, he had appealed to Rome but quickly changed course and traveled to the East toward Ephesus.

While Pelagius resided in the East, he happened to be examined by a council in Diospolis (415) where he, after defending himself, was exonerated from the charges of heresy. Word of this was brought to the West,

* See Chapman's "The Condemnation of Pelagianism," in *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012, republished from New York: Benziger Brothers, 1928), 133–83. Much of my account is a derived summary.

and a council of disappointed clergy was convened in Carthage (416) to meet this unfortunate exoneration with a just sentence of condemnation. The council wrote to Rome in order to have their judgment confirmed "by the authority of the Apostolic See."[1] Once again, the bishop of Rome was called upon to examine the decrees of an Eastern synod, Diospolis. Another council was held in Milevis (416), which also wrote a letter to Rome for an authoritative sentence against Pelagius's heresy.[2] One more interesting letter came from five African bishops, including St. Augustine. They informed Pope St. Innocent (400–417), a saint of both Catholic and Orthodox communions (July 28), that there were some involved who trusted in the "ecclesiastical acts"[3] that absolved Pelagius at Diospolis. Therefore, they wrote, "He should be sent for to Rome by your reverence and carefully examined."[4]

Pope St. Innocent responded by commending the African bishops for their vigilance for the truth and "interprets their request . . . as an acknowledgement of his own role as ultimate judge in central questions of doctrine."[5] He wrote:

> For you decided that it was proper to refer to our judgment, knowing *what is due* to the Apostolic See since all we who are set in this place desire to follow the Apostle from whom the very episcopate and *whole authority of this name is derived.*[6] Following in his steps, we know how to condemn the evil and to approve the good. So also, you have by your sacerdotal office *preserved the customs of the Fathers,*[7] and have not spurned that which they decreed by a divine and not human sentence, that whatsoever is done, even though it be in *distant provinces,* should not be ended without being

[1] Augustine, Epistle 175, To Innocent, *PL* 33.759, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 195.

[2] Giles, *Documents*, 197.

[3] Aurelius, Alpius, Augustine, Evodius, and Possidius; Augustine, Epistle 177, To Innocent, *PL* 33.764, as quoted in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 199.

[4] Augustine, Epistle 177, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 199.

[5] Brian E. Daley, S.J., "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches," in *Church Unity & The Papal Office*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 42.

[6] Here St. Innocent speaks about how the Apostle Peter is the genesis of the episcopal office, a theme that goes back into the roots of patristic Petrinology.

[7] This is very significant as the pope, writing in 416, had only the second to fourth centuries to look back upon as the "custom of the Fathers." It is more than likely that the stories we've covered earlier were included in his thought.

> brought to the knowledge of this See, *that by its authority* the whole just pronouncement should be strengthened, and that from it all other churches (like waters flowing from their *natural source* and flowing through the *different regions of the world*, the pure streams of *one incorrupt head*), should receive what they ought to enjoin, whom they ought to wash, and whom that water, worth of pure bodes, should avoid as defiled with uncleansable filth.[8]

St. Innocent alludes to the Council of Sardica (343), where the Roman See was *canonically* assigned with the task of being the final court of appeals. This interpretation of the canons of Sardica appears to carry a maximalist interpretation rather than a minimalist approach, which Anglicans and Orthodox are more prone to take up. On a first reading, it sounds as if St. Innocent was resting the authority of the Apostolic See on canon law, just like St. Boniface seemed to have said in one place above. Also, notice he understood the prerogatives of Sardica to pertain to "distant provinces," indeed "all other churches." This goes directly contrary to what post-schism Byzantine canonists have commented, such as John Zonaras (twelfth century), who said that Sardican privileges were limited to the West.[9] More clarity on this is demonstrated in the pope's reply to the other African council held in Milevis. He wrote:

> It is therefore with due care and propriety that you consult the *secrets of the Apostolic office*, that office, I mean, to which belongs, besides the things which are without, *the care of all the churches*. . . . I do not think it is unknown to your prudence . . . that *responses ever flow from the Apostolic fountain to all the provinces* for those who ask . . . especially as often as a question of faith is discussed, I think that all our brothers and fellow-bishops *should refer to none other than to Peter the author of their name and office*.[10]

---

[8] Epistle 29, To the Council of Carthage, *PL* 33.780; Augustine, Epistle 181, quoted by Chapman in *Studies in Early Papacy*, 146–47.

[9] Milton V. Anastos, "A Survey of the Relations between the Byzantine and the Roman churches," in *Aspects of the Mind of Byzantium: Political Theory: Theology, and Ecclesiastical Relations with the See of Rome* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2001), as found at Myriobiblos Library (website), http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/milton1_5.html.

[10] Augustine, Epistle 182, To the Council of Milevis, in *PL* 33.784, as quoted by Fr. John Chapman in *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), 148.

Quite astounding. The bishopric of Rome, says the pope, is given this singular description of being the "Apostolic office" and then states that when disputes get referred to the papal court at Rome, it is the same as referring to St. Peter. Further, as in the previous letter, St. Peter is said to be the "author" of the episcopal office. The Cyprianic, Optatian, and Augustinian language is unmistakable here. The basic message is that the African councils referring their synodal decrees to the papal court is equal to referring to St. Peter, the very source of the episcopal office. The source of the episcopate was assumed to have the power to unify by possessing final doctrinal authority. The implication is unmistakable. From this office comes "responses" which flow out from an incorrupt fountain head to "all the provinces."

Now how did the Africans respond to this? If we could accept St. Augustine as a reliable witness, we find his take on it from a letter he wrote to St. Paulinus (354–431), bishop of Nola. In this he reviewed how the Council of Diospolis had defended Pelagius and how the councils of North Africa had sent reports of it to Pope Innocent:

> To all of these he answered in the manner which was *the right and the duty* of the Bishop of the Apostolic See.[11]

It was both the "right" and "duty" of the pope to respond in the "manner" in which he did, says St. Augustine. A right and duty signifies authority and a certain responsibility. By this statement, St. Augustine, whose feast for the Orthodox is June 15, affirmed the *Irenaean*, *Cyprianic*, *Optatian*, and *Innocentian* principles of the Roman primacy.

St. Innocent was succeeded by a Greek man named Zosimus, whose pontificate was noticeably short (417–418). It was to him that an appeal came from Pelagius's disciple, Celestius. Giving the upmost claim to abide by the judgment of the Apostolic See if he needed to be corrected,[12] Celestius was somehow able to "present himself" as free from blame to the pope when he made it to Rome. Pelagius, also making the claim to submit to the authority of Rome,[13] managed to write letters to Rome defending himself as well, which also caused the pope to examine both of their situations afresh, *even deducing that they proved themselves to be orthodox.* Consequently, St. Zosimus wrote a letter to the North African

[11] Augustine, Epistle 186, To Paulinus, *PL* 33.816, quoted by Chapman in *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 156.

[12] Augustine, "De Pecc. Orig.," 26, 5, and 6, *PL* 45.1718, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 205.

[13] Pelagius, "Libellus FIdei," *PL* 45.1718, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 207.

bishops giving them two months to provide further evidence that both Celestius and Pelagius should remain condemned and excommunicated.[14] The African church mistook this as the pope lifting the excommunication placed upon them by his predecessor.

The African bishops assembled in a council in Carthage (417) led by St. Aurelius (d. 430) and asked for a further delay in time, extending the two-month period that the pope gave for producing records against Celestius to be sent to Rome. They also insisted that the judgment of the "See of Peter" in blessed Innocent, of holy memory, should stand firm unless Celestius openly and forthrightly condemned the errors for which he was originally accused of heresy.[15] The insinuation of the letter seems to be that of warning the pope not to be too hasty in exonerating the heretics. Some have thought that this proves St. Zosimus became a heretical Pelagian himself, denying original sin altogether. However, the accounts of this entire situation by contemporary African residents, such as St. Augustine,[16] Marius Mercator,[17] and Paulinus the Milanese deacon,[18] paint an entirely different picture, namely, that St. Zosimus chose to be as lenient as possible by halting the condemnation of the unheard, that Celestius and Pelagius were deceptively showing themselves in accord with orthodoxy, and that the pope never endorsed a denial of original sin.

To this council in Carthage, Pope St. Zosimus responded rather sharply. He sensed that the African bishops thought he moved too fast to reconsider the ban on these two heretics. In a somewhat apologetic manner, the pope defended his orthodoxy and his procedure, which were both his "right and duty." He writes:

> Although the tradition of the Fathers has attributed to the Apostolic See so great authority that *none would dare*

[14] Zosimus, Epistle 2, *PL* 20.649, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 206.

[15] Council of Carthage, "To Zosimus," in "Contra Collatorem," by Prosper, 15, *PL* 45.1808, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 211. However, because only a small portion of that letter was preserved, one will find more details about what the Council of Carthage wrote to Zosimus in Augustine's *On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin* (Book II), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/15062.htm.

[16] Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin*.

[17] Marius Mercator, "Commonitorium Supre Nomine Celestii," 3–4 and 9–11, *PL* 45.1687, translated by Giles in *Documents*, 213; Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 161n2.

[18] Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 166–68. Paulinus was residing in North Africa but was a deacon from Milan and an assistant of Ambrose.

> *to contest its judgment*, and has preserved this ever in its canons and rules, and current ecclesiastical discipline in its law still pays the reverence *which it ought to the name of Peter*, from which it has itself its origin, for canonical antiquity (*canonica antiquitas*) willed that this Apostle should have such power by the decisions of all . . . *and by the promise of Christ our God, that he should loose the bound and bind the loosed, and an equal condition of power has been given to those who with his consent have received the heritage of his See*. . . . Since, then, Peter is the head of so great authority and has confirmed the suffrages of our forefathers *since his time*, so that the Roman Church is confirmed by all laws and disciplines, *divine or human*: whose place we rule, and the power of whose name we inherit, as you are not ignorant, my brethren . . . yet, though such was our authority *that none could reconsider our decision.*[19]

In this letter, St. Zosimus makes clear that while the Church has paid the due reverence to the name of St. Peter in its laws, disciplines, and canons, the reverence does not derive from the latter realities. "We may note," says the Oxfordian H. E. Symonds, "that these powers are guaranteed (*sanxere*) by the decrees of the Fathers, but they are grounded on the *promise of Christ and Divine law.*"[20]

But did he make a serious mistake with Celestius and Pelagius? Besides proving that he was not decisive about either the state of Pelagius or Celestius, St. Zosimus defended himself by assuring the Council of Carthage *that no final step of excusing Celestius or Pelagius had transacted.* As it turns out, we learn from Mercator and St. Augustine that once the requisite documents had arrived in Rome from Carthage, Celestius fled Rome and no longer wished to present himself before the pope. Thereupon, St. Zosimus issued a *Tractoria*, which definitively condemned Pelagius and Celestius. This decree was sent out to the East and West, and was understood by contemporaries as the final and decisive judgment against both the heresy and its holders, bearing the power of Peter's sword of excommunication.[21] The African residents cited above all testify

[19] Zosimus, Epistle 12, in *PL* 20.676, as quoted by Chapman in *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 170.

[20] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 102–03.

[21] For a detailed survey of African perception of Zosimus's Tractoria, see Chapman's *Studies on*

to the orthodoxy of St. Zosimus, through and through. St. Augustine, Marius Mercator, St. Prosper of Aquitaine (390–455), and St. Paulinus the deacon all came to his defense.[22] St. Prosper said that "Zosimus of happy memory added the authority of his own judgment to the decrees of the African councils and so placed the sword of Peter in the hands of all the bishops to cut off the heretics from our communion."[23] Such history shows how North African saints relied on papal authority for the final arbitration of doctrine.

While this may have been, there is also evidence that the bishops of North Africa did not hold to Rome's immediate jurisdiction in their internal affairs. The question here is whether clergyman condemned by their local synods were allowed to go directly to Rome for reexamination of their cases? In 419, the North Africans reached a point where they considered Rome's acceptance of appeals to be a violation of the principle of subsidiary. However, Africa had at one time allowed appeals to Rome, and they continued even after the famous Apiarius event and the councils forbidding appeals overseas to Rome.[24] In one epistle, St. Augustine describes the intervention of Rome in African affairs: "There are cases on record, in which the Apostolic See, either pronouncing judgment or confirming the judgment of others, sanctioned decisions by which persons, for certain offenses, were neither deposed from their episcopal office nor left altogether unpunished."[25]

While the Africans did protest the papal prerogative of even an

*the Early Papacy*, 171–83. See especially the comments made on what truly carried an authoritative judgment in the case of Celestius and Pelagius. The evidence is quite contrary to those who would attempt to emphasize the Council of Carthage and its reply to St. Zosimus's first letter.

[22] Even the Anglican Jalland recognizes St. Zosimus was not to be accused of heresy at all (Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944], 286).

[23] *Prosper of Aquitaine: Defense of St. Augustine*, no. 32, *Ancient Christian Writers*, eds. Johannes Quasten and Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., trans. P. De Letter, S.J. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1963), 133. For St. Prosper, says Professor Alexander Y. Hwang, "the Roman Pontiff represented the Church and determined her tradition," and that "it is the Church, properly interpreting Scripture through the teaching of the Apostolic See . . . which defines Catholic grace," i.e., that settles doctrinal controversy; Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang, eds., *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 79.

[24] See Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 184–209

[25] Augustine, Letter 209 (A.D. 423), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 1, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. J. G. Cunningham (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102209.htm.

appellate jurisdiction for priests and other clergy under the episcopal office, and preferred to investigate whether councils gave Rome the right to hear appeals, in the end they became "increasingly dependent on the papacy for judicial decisions and advice."[26] While they might gain our sympathy for being frustrated over the bishop of Rome passing some unwanted absolutions on persons who were otherwise known to be truly guilty (e.g., Apiarius), the short-lived rejection of Rome's appellate jurisdiction went against the Council of Sardica (343), which was accepted in both East and West, and which had in attendance Gratus, the archbishop of Carthage himself.[27] These attempts at making a complete African independence from the jurisdiction of Rome gradually dissappeared throughout the years leading up to the pontificate of Pope Boniface II (530–532), by whose time we see none further. By then the North African bishops, under the archbishopric of Carthage, wrote to Rome stating its constitution to have Rome judge ecclesiastical matters and have them guided by the Apostolic See.[28]

In concluding this section, we can see that the Apostolic See of Rome was adamant that the Church's essential government was rooted in the divine and apostolic foundations. The investiture given to St. Peter by Christ the Lord is inherited through the lineal succession to the Chair of Peter in Rome. The sacred rights of the keys of the kingdom, therefore, are reserved in a special way to the bishops of Rome. Their decrees are not merely binding on Rome or the West but on the universal Church. While the canonical rules of the Church provide a legislative structure for the court of Rome to adjudicate episcopal cases anywhere in the world, the right and duty of this position was claimed to have been rooted in the voice of Christ to St. Peter, the key-bearer, and therefore by divine institution.

When put into action, as St. Prosper stated, the pope had the power to use the apostolic sword to cut out from the Church heretics who inflict scandal upon the Body of Christ. In contrast to the above testimonies of the saints, some defenders of Eastern Orthodoxy claim that the "honor due Rome in the Early Church was a *derived honor*—an honor derived

[26] J. E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 206.

[27] Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 126.

[28] Stanislaw Adamiak, *Carthage, Constantinople, and Rome: Imperial and Papal interventions in the life of the Church in Byzantine Africa 533–698* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016), 137.

from the universality which the Roman capital epitomized."[29] The idea that "Rome held an actual primacy in the Church, rather than one of honor—this would have struck the primitive Church," says Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, "as being absurd." Furthermore, if "some personal primacy, aside from that of Christ, had existed in the Church, would it not have belonged to Saint James, the first bishop of Jerusalem and kinsman of the Lord."[30] In agreement with this is the much earlier Nilus Cabasilas (1357–1363), archbishop of Thessaloniki who wrote the following:

> The pope indeed has two privileges: he is the bishop of Rome . . . and he is the first among the bishops. From Peter he has received the Roman episcopacy; *as to the primacy, he received it much later from the blessed Fathers and the pious Emperors*, for it was just that ecclesiastical affairs be accomplished in order.[31]

[29] Chrysostomos of Etna and Auxentios of Photiki, *The Roman West and the Byzantine East*, 2nd ed. (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1997), 21.

[30] Chrysostomos and Auxentios, *The Roman West and the Byzantine East*, 21.

[31] *De primatu papae*, *PG* 149.701CD; Moscow Patriarchate, "Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church," The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations, Dec. 26, 2013, §4n10, https://mospat.ru/en/2013/12/26/news96344/.

*Chapter Twelve*

# The Papacy and Early Relations with the Byzantine East

## Pope St. Celestine I and the Council of Ephesus (431)

As shown above, the papal claims of Sts. Innocent, Zosimus, and Boniface were quite explicit, and they all speak to the divine institution of the Petrine primacy. Under Pope St. Celestine I (422–432), the same picture is portrayed, but this time farther out toward the East. There was clear interaction between the papacy and the East under the pontificate of Sts. Julius I and Damasus I,[1] but the interactions of Rome with Alexandria during the Nestorian crisis give a much more vivid portrayal of the patristic perspective on the Roman See. When St. Cyril decided that Nestorius's error deserved to be brought before the disciplinary office of the Church, he wrote to Celestine saying that, in such times, "*ancient church custom requires me to inform your holiness. . . .* Deign therefore *to decide* what seems right, whether we ought to communicate at all with him."[2] Cyril here was seeking for a judgment on the bishop of Constantinople from the Roman See, and added that the pope should

[1] There is also the appeal of John Chrysostom to Pope Innocent I, but the space here couldn't afford this story. For more information on this, see Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 291–94.

[2] Cyril, Epistle 11, To Celestine, *PG* 77.80, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 239.

also inform "by letter to the most religious and God-loving bishops of Macedonia, *and to all the bishops of the East.*"[3] Here we see the bishop of Alexandria asking the bishop of Rome to intervene upon affairs in Constantinople and to bring it to the notice of all the Churches. Of particular interest is the choice of words. He requests from the pope to "decide what seems right" (τυπῶσαι τὸ δοκοῦν), which is the same terminology used in ecumenical councils for a judicial decree,[4] and that this should be made known to all the major heads of the Church. St. Celestine, upon receiving this letter, summoned a Roman synod of bishops, and it produced a reply to St. Cyril with the following:

> If he, Nestorius, persists, an *open sentence must be passed on him*. . . . And so, appropriating to yourself the *authority of our see*, and *using our position*, you shall with resolute severity *carry out this sentence.*[5]

The Roman synod gave Nestorius ten days to recant, beginning from the moment he received notice of the letter:

> If he will not do this he will know that he is in every way removed from our body. . . . We have written the same to our brothers and fellow-bishops John, Rufus, Juvenal, and Flavian,[6] so our judgment about him, or rather the *divine sentence* of our Christ, *may be known.*[7]

---

[3] Cyril, Epistle 11, To Celestine, *PG* 77.80, in *The Roman Primacy: AD 430–451*, by Luke Rivington (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 10.

[4] Cyril, Epistle 11, in *The Roman Primacy*, by Luke Rivington, 13 and 21–23. Concerning the root word τύπος Rivington quotes the seventeenth century theologian Jacques-Bénigne Lignel Bossuet: "It signifies, in Greek, to declare juridically; τύπος is a rule, a sentence, and τυπῶσαι τὸ δοκοῦν is to declare one's opinion judicially. The Pope alone could do it. Neither Cyril, nor any other patriarch, had the power to depose Nestorius, who was not their subject: the Pope alone did it, and no one was found to exclaim against it, because his authority extended over all."

[5] Celestine, Epistle 12, To Cyril, in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating of the History of the Church, AD 337–461*, ed. J. Stevenson, rev. W. H. C. Frend (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966), 300.

[6] John of Antioch, Rufus of Thessalonica, Juvenal of Jerusalem, and Flavian of Philippi. If we include Cyril of Alexandria, this would include all the known chief patriarchs, except for Constantinople, whose bishop was the accused.

[7] Celestine, Epistle 12, To Cyril, in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies*, eds. W. H. C. Frend and J. Stevenson, 300.

In a separate letter to Nestorius, St. Celestine further defined what this sort of excommunication meant. If he did not recant before the ten days were up, he was "excluded from the communion *of the whole* Catholic church"[8] and "expelled from the universal fellowship [of bishops] and the assembly of Christians."[9] In his letter to John of Antioch, Juvenal of Jerusalem, Rufus of Thessalonica, and Flavian of Philippi, the pope said that if Nestorius didn't subscribe in a written form to the Christological definition of the Roman synod, he would be "deposed from the episcopal college and that ruin has come upon him."[10] This wasn't merely the Roman synod excluding the bishop of Constantinople from its own communion. Rather, this was a sentence excluding him from the entire Church of Christ and the society of Christians, following his expulsion from the priesthood. The pope had the conciliar letter to St. Cyril and his letter to Nestorius taken to Alexandria through his deacon Posidonius, and they were then both to be delivered by St. Cyril to Constantinople. This much is clear thus far: "Celestine thought that the bishop of Rome had the authority to excommunicate the bishop of Constantinople, using the bishop of Alexandria as his agent."[11] As such, St. Cyril took it upon himself to add another letter directed for Nestorius. In this, he reiterated what St. Celestine had threatened:

> Take notice then that in conjunction with the holy synod which was assembled in great Rome. . . . And unless your religiousness does this by the time prescribed in the epistle of our aforementioned . . . Celestine,[12] bishop of the Romans, know that you have neither part nor lot with us, *nor place nor rank among the priests and bishops of God.*[13]

In his letter to the clergy and laity of Constantinople, St. Cyril says that if Nestorius did not recant by the time decreed by the pope, he

---

[8] Epistle 13, To Nestorius, *PL* 50.483, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 241.

[9] Richard Price and Thomas Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431: Documents and Proceedings*, vol. 72, *Translated Texts for Historians*, trans. Richard Price (Liverpool University Press, 2020), 141.

[10] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 155.

[11] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 148.

[12] Translated spelling.

[13] Cyril, Epistle 17, *PG* 77.105–22, in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies*, eds. Frend and Stevenson, 301–02.

would be "*held excommunicate by all.*"[14] He also took this to be a universal excommunication as well, and voiced it as standing in Rome's authority as the pope's appointed vicar. This action on the part of Rome and Alexandria was certainly an attempt to exercise jurisdiction in the East and that which is beyond the Sardican structure, since Nestorius had not been condemned by a provincial synod nor did he or the bishops associated with that synod (or neighboring bishops) appeal from an official sentence. This goes to show that while the Sardican structure was appropriate and valid, it was not a limitation to the Roman primacy. Symonds, speaking from Anglican sympathies, comments on this:

> On any showing, this was a piece of the most high-handed behaviour. Even granting that the See of Rome constituted a court capable of trying the Bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius had not even been cited before it. *His condemnation was pronounced without his case being heard*, and the standard of doctrine imposed for his acceptance was the personal teaching of the occupant of a rival see.[15]

Or, the pope saw enough investigation had been conducted and that sufficient outreach was given in order to warrant a binding demand upon Nestorius to the proper Gospel, and believed it was time to increase the consequences. John, bishop of Antioch, also received notice of the threat of excommunication coming from the Roman synod and sought, along with the "advice of many of the other oriental bishops,"[16] to beg Nestorius to comply with the papal demand.[17] As Dom John Chapman observed, here "we find the bishop of New Rome threatened with deposition within ten days. . . . The patriarch of Alexandria promotes and executes the mandate of the pope; the patriarch of Antioch admits that it must

[14] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 172 (emphasis added).

[15] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 117 (emphasis added). It is possible that Symonds is ignoring the number of epistolary exchanges preceded this Roman judgment. Also, Symonds thinks that the Pope condemned Nestorius at the synod. However, this is false. The letters dispatched from Rome to the East through St. Cyril had a ten-day span of time where Nestorius simply had to affirm the doctrine defined by the Roman synod or else face excommunication.

[16] John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 45.

[17] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 177.

inevitably be obeyed."[18] Not a single complaint of an abuse of power or usurpation of authority not inherent in the See of Rome is found. Particular attention should be paid to how the East perceived this original letter of the pope.

Meanwhile, Nestorius himself, given prior notice of what was coming from Rome through John of Antioch, urged Emperor Theodosius II to convene an ecumenical council even before the dispatch of the Roman letters arrived in Constantinople.[19] Due to the conflicts already existing between Nestorius and St. Cyril, the former desired to have a council to be able to accuse Cyril of Apollinarianism.[20] Before the delegation of St. Cyril made it to Constantinople, the Emperor Theodosius II, on November 19 of 430, sent out a universal summons for bishops to meet in Ephesus for an ecumenical council. As a result of this summons, the original plan of Sts. Celestine and Cyril to prosecute Nestorius by means of the Roman letter was intercepted by this summons to an ecumenical council. This was learned at the beginning of December 430 when bishops from St. Cyril were sent to deliver the ultimatum from Pope Celestine.[21] Since it was universally recognized at this time that the emperor, even by virtue of his secular office in relation to his service to

[18] Fr. John Chapman, O.S.B., *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 18.

[19] Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, 1996), 145; Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 23; Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 40.

[20] Rivington, *Roman Primacy*, 28.

[21] The men from Cyril arrived on Dec. 7, and so the day of expiration was Dec. 17; E. Giles, *Documents*, 244; "In December of 430, the Alexandrian citation commissioned by Celestine of Rome was duly delivered to Nestorius" (L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 153); Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 197; Beresford Kidd, *The Roman Primacy: To A.D. 461* (London: The MacMillan Publishing Company, 1936), 107; McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 46. Some readers may suppose that since the Pope's epistle to Nestorius was written and sent off in August, and that the beginning of his ten day extension began upon receipt of said epistle. However, as that very epistle states that the pope entrusted St. Cyril to carry out the sentence, and therefore the ultimatum would be delivered through St. Cyril's own messengers. As the above scholars recognize, the confrontation between Nestorius and St. Cyril, which caused the initiation of the 10-day papal ultimatum, did not begin until December 430 (Chadwick says Nov. 30). Thomas Graumann records how the Cyrillian delegation that was to deliver the summons to repentance arrived on November 30; see Thomas Graumann, "'Reading' The First Council of Ephesus (431)," in *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*, eds. Richard Price and Mary Whitby (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 40.

the Church, had the right to convoke an ecumenical council, St. Cyril wasn't going to oppose that, nor was Pope St. Celestine.

This plan for a fresh examination of the controversies, even surrounding the accusations against St. Cyril himself, would serve to stall the full excommunication of Nestorius. In other words, when the pope received word that the emperor was going to convene an ecumenical council wherein the Christological doctrine and Nestorius could be examined in the presence of numerous bishops, he was on board with such a plan and acquiesced to it, though "he would not detract the judgment already given."[22] St. Cyril, knowing that the ten-day papal ultimatum would be expired by the time the council actually met in the following year, wrote to the pope asking if a council should even receive Nestorius since the Roman "sentence already passed must hold."[23] In answer to this,[24] the pope showed a change of policy in regard to Nestorius, favoring a conciliatory effort to pressure him back to orthodoxy.[25] Instead of the swift and open sentence dropping like a hammer on the head of Nestorius, he adjusted to the fresh examination of the imperial council to be held in Ephesus. He justified this by appeals to Holy Scripture, where God desires the repentance of all men and desires the death of no sinner. The hope was that Nestorius would be given the adequate space, in God's

[22] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 145.

[23] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 203; see Celestine, Epistle 16, To Cyril of Alexandria, *PL* 50.501, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 244. This shows that, for Cyril, the ultimatum of the pope was in effect.

[24] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 202–03. Some readers might attempt to understand that the pope's original sentence had passed and that it simply was not borne by enough authority to make a council superfluous. In other words, Rome's judgment passed and was in effect, but that still leaves Nestorius in the Church, ready to be treated as a bishop in good standing by all the other churches if they deemed it appropriate. However, the pope's allowance for a fresh trial shows that he himself understood the case of Nestorius to be still open to examination. We might contrast this with how Pope St. Celestine saw to it that Pelagius, when the latter had sought a fresh trial, allowed for no further examination into the matter, excluding all possibility of a new trial even in Rome. He banished Pelagius from Italy, in fact. St. Celestine simply said that the sentence of his predecessors must remain inviolate and that penance was the only thing left for the heretics. St. Celestine didn't judge Nestorius's case to be beyond adjustment, and therefore he extended the time for the final and definitive excommunication until after the council had met in Ephesus; see Rombs and Hwang, eds., *Tradition and the Rule of Faith*, 74; Stuart Squires, *The Pelagian Controversy: An Introduction to the Enemies of Grace and the Conspiracy of Lost Souls* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 142.

[25] Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint of a Heretic*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, eds. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth (Oxford University Press, 2004), 141.

providence, to recalculate his steps and successfully repent of his errors in the presence of many. However, the pope said that if, upon this extension, Nestorius were to persist in his error, "*let the decree stand* and let him be stuffed with the fruit of his own judgment."[26] He insisted that the council should, out of a sense of God's character of mercy, seek the repentance of Nestorius by any means.[27] The pope "abandoned his plan of proceeding against Nestorius by sentence of deposition and the use of Cyril as his executor,"[28] and acquiesced to all the council of "brothers" to now be the means of judging Nestorius. Despite all of this, when Nestorius had arrived in Ephesus in preparation for the council, Memnon, the bishop of Ephesus, had ordered all the churches to shun him away from participation "once the result of the Roman synod had been publicly notified."[29] In any case, upon receiving the summons of Theodosius to be present in Ephesus in 431, the pope generously prepared three legates to represent him at the Council: Bishop Arcadius, Bishop Projectus, and the presbyter Philip. When they made it to the council, their first order of business was to read the papal letter addressed to the whole assembly. In part, it states:

> Out of our solicitude, we have sent our holy brethren and fellow priests, who are at one with us and are most approved men, Arcadius, and Projectus, the bishops, and our presbyter, Philip, that they may be present at what is done and *may carry out what things have been already decreed be us* (*quæ a nobis antea statuta sunt, exequantur*).[30]

The legates were to be the final judge on the council, and the pope saw his prior judgment as binding.[31] Therefore, the pope was not inviting the council to revise the decision of his synod nor the terms and conditions

---

[26] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 203–04 (emphasis added). Notice, the pope didn't think the council's judgment would be issuing a fresh condemnation but merely letting the original decree stand.

[27] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 202–03. Above all, the desire to be diplomatic and pastoral, besides reason itself, grounded the pope's willingness to redirect his discipline to the fuller examination of a council.

[28] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 118.

[29] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 58.

[30] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), Letter of Pope Celestine to the Synod of Ephesus, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3810.htm (emphasis added).

[31] Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 142.

for Nestorius. One of those conditions was the commission of St. Cyril to *fill the place* of the Apostolic See in executing the anathema on Nestorius. As the presiding bishop of the council, St. Cyril was proclaimed as "*holding also the place of the archbishop of the church of the Romans.*"[32] Prior to the papal legates arriving, the first session consisted of St. Cyril acting on this commission by quickly reviewing the grounds for Nestorius's condemnation, and the council's first session ended successfully in that endeavor. Failing to appear after being sufficiently summoned, Nestorius was consequently condemned. After announcing that Nestorius, in violation of the canons, had failed to appear after being summoned in addition to promoting false doctrine, the council came to the following conclusion:

> Compelled thereto by the *canons* and *by the letter* (ἀναγκαίως κατεπειχθέντες ἀπό τε τῶν κανόνων, καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, κ.τ.λ.) *of our most holy father and fellow-servant Cœlestine*, the Roman bishop, we have come, with many tears, to this sorrowful sentence against him, namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has blasphemed, decrees by the holy Synod that Nestorius be excluded from the episcopal dignity, and from all priestly communion.[33]

The council had understood that St. Celestine's authoritative letter was being carried out to its conclusion. The papal legates arrived after the first session, and so they arrived to find that the council had already passed judgment. They proceeded to review what the council did. In this process, they were given the floor to speak. In the first place, they read aloud the letter of the pope to the council, which is already partly quoted above. For the legates, the council had the purpose of carrying out decisions which the pope had "long ago defined"[34] and which now must be "carried out to the uttermost."[35] One statement by Projectus makes this unmistakable when he says that the Roman decree that was issued originally is "brought to a complete fulfillment."[36] This serves as further proof that Pope St. Celestine's sentence of excommunication

[32] Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, *Concilia* 3.993A, in *The Roman Primacy*, by Kidd, 108 (emphasis added).

[33] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), Decree of the Council Against Nestorius, *New Advent*.

[34] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), Session II, *New Advent*.

[35] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), Session II, *New Advent*.

[36] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 374.

upon Nestorius was temporarily delayed past its ten-day ultimatum by the pope's agreement to participate in examining Nestorius in the context of a council.[37] For if the pope's sentence had already been passed with finality, there was nothing further to be done to complete it. But here, Projectus understood the very judgment of Celestine to have become complete only with the first session of the Council of Ephesus. One Eastern bishop present, Firmus of Caesarea, said that Rome had "previously given a decision and type"[38] on this matter.[39] What Firmus says next concerning the original papal ultimatum is particularly noteworthy. He states that the original Roman decree, which was supposed to have taken effect ten days upon Nestorius having received it, was already heeded back in the month of December when the pope's letter arrived in Constantinople. However, Firmus also knew that the summoning of the council extended that official excommunication, and so he then pronounced that the Roman decree was suspended only to then be put into effect by the council:

> This [decree] we have followed and (*since the limit set for Nestorius's emendation was long gone by*, and much time has passed since our arrival at the city of Ephesus in accordance with the decree of the most pious emperor, and thereupon having delayed no little time so that the day fixed by the emperor was past; and since Nestorius although cited had not appeared) *we carried into effect the type* (τύπον) having pronounced against him a canonical and apostolic judgment.[40]

---

[37] Projectus also appealed to the "patience" of Pope St. Celestine as a further weight against Nestorius (see Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 379). Well, if St. Celestine had intended his original ten-day ultimatum to have already completely been put into effect, then what patience could Projectus be referring to? It makes far more sense to understand that the pope extended his ultimatum to the fresh forum of the Ephesine Council.

[38] The word type could be translated "decree" since it is the same Greek word used when Cyril had asked the pope for a decree against Nestorius originally; see Rivington, *Roman Primacy*, 42–43.

[39] See the wonderful defense of the divine primacy and universal jurisdiction by Pope Pius XI using the intervention of Pope St. Celestine in the Nestorian affair of the East in *Lux Veritatis*, On the Council of Ephesus (December 25, 1931), http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19311225_lux-veritatis.html.

[40] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), "Extracts from the Acts," *New Advent*. The English translation in *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, by Price and Graumann, 374 is preferred.

This Firmus, successor to the great St. Basil of Caesarea, understood the pope to be able to pass such a sentence and for it to hold a legally binding value for the clergy of the East. The council, invoking the authority of the pope,[41] "can portray its own verdict as merely acting upon the Roman decision."[42] Until December 430, there was no consciousness that an ecumenical council was going to be the means through which the papal excommunication of Nestorius would take place. It was entirely intended to happen, *ipso facto*, by a failure to abide by the pope's ultimatum. All there at Ephesus knew this, and yet no one sought to discipline the pope for his hasty judgment. In fact, *it was his judgment that the council put into effect.* After seeing that the council made the right decision in both doctrine and discipline, the papal legates made an outstanding remark:

> We offer our thanks to the holy and venerable Synod, that when the writings of our holy and blessed pope had been read to you, the holy members by our [or your] holy voices, you *joined yourselves to the holy head* also by your holy acclamations. For your blessedness is not ignorant that the *head of the whole faith*, the *head of the Apostles*, is blessed *Peter the Apostle.*[43]

The thinking here is clear. The East had been in possession of the pope's ultimatum and excommunication of Nestorius, and though they were all prepared to abide by the pope's judgment back then, they were there at the council finally putting the actual execution of condemnation into effect. By doing this, the members of the council joined as one mind with the head. The words of the legates also confirm that Pope St. Celestine himself "clearly believed that the Roman see wielded the definitive and final authority in the conciliar process."[44] In a day when many Orthodox deny that the bishop of Rome is the head of the universal Church, it may come as a surprise that an ecumenical council that was well above 90 percent Greek in attendance were only too happy to join themselves as "members" to their "head," Pope St. Celestine. Later

[41] Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 160.

[42] Thomas Graumann, "'Reading' The First Council of Ephesus," in *Chalcedon in Context*, ed. Price, 40.

[43] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), "Extracts from the Acts," *New Advent*.

[44] Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 174.

on, Philip the presbyter and legate of Rome made a statement "replete with notions of Petrine authority"[45] before all:

> There is no doubt, and in fact it *has been known in all ages*, that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince (ἔξαρχος) and *head of the Apostles*, pillar of the faith, and *foundation* (θεμέλιος) of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, and that to him was given the power of loosing and binding sins: *who down even to today and forever both lives and judges in his successors.* The holy and most blessed pope Cœlestine, *according to due order, is his successor and holds his place*, and us he sent to supply his place in this holy synod.[46]

This is merely an echo claimed by his predecessors. This had been known in all ages, indeed. "This legatine declaration," says Dr. Walter Ullmann (1910–1983), Cambridge Professor of Medieval History, "was of fundamental importance, evidenced by its reappearance in countless official papal statements from Leo I right down to the Vatican decree of 1870 concerning the perpetuity of the primacy of St. Peter."[47] Certainly "all ages" would precede St. Leo's time given that Philip speaks when St. Leo was merely a deacon of the church of Rome. This is perhaps one of the clearest statements to the divine institution of the papal office made in the official Acts of an ecumenical council. Not only do we have an appeal to the *Tu es Petrus* investiture but also a clear statement saying that the episcopal line of the Roman bishopric holds both "today *and forever*" the succession from St. Peter in a supremely unique way. The legates here should be understood as simply conveying what the current profession was in Rome. J. N. D. Kelly concurs with this, for in his description of St. Celestine, he summarizes:

> In his correspondence and through his legates at the council Celestine repeatedly asserted, with an unprecedented insistence, the pope's claim, *as successor and living representative*

[45] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 367.

[46] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), "Session III," *New Advent.*

[47] Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 19.

> *of St. Peter*, to paternal oversight of the entire church, *eastern no less than western.*[48]

Now how did St. Cyril and the council respond to Philip in the official *Acts*? We read the following response:

> The *professions* which have been made by Arcadius and Projectus, the most holy and pious bishops, *as also by Philip*, the most religious presbyter of the Roman Church, *stand manifest to the holy Synod.*[49]

These statements of the papal prerogatives "stand manifest" to the holy council. These claims of universal papal authority over both East and West, in or out of council, were put into the official Acts of this Eastern synod with absolutely no protest. Though, this observation is only significant depending on the interpreter. The Anglican H. E. Symonds makes note that just because the Easterners did not protest does not mean their silence equaled consent, for it was "not the custom of the Eastern bishops . . . to protest against the claims of Rome, *when Rome is on their side.*"[50] But the fact of the matter is this: the statements of the papal legates made it into the text of the *Acts*. To think that the Easterners would have permitted without a fight what they thought were erroneous propositions into the *Acts* is to underestimate their care for orthodoxy. Moreover, there is more than one kind of acceptance on a doctrinal matter. There is the kind of acceptance which outwardly accepts but inwardly disagrees, and then there is the kind of acceptance which agrees both internally and externally. In the setting of an ecumenical council, what kind of acceptance matters?

But just how ecumenical was this meeting? It should be recalled that the first session lacked the presence of not just Nestorius but also John of Antioch. This was, according to him, because he and his fellow companions were delayed by travel.[51] St. Cyril did not wait too long before he went ahead and opened up the first session. From the get-go, then, the Ephesine Council under St. Cyril was destined to be rivaled by another council headed by John of Antioch in a near vicinity. Since Nestorius,

[48] J. N. D. Kelly, "Celestine I," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 42 (emphasis added).

[49] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), "Extracts from the Acts," *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[50] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 122.

[51] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 154.

holding the Byzantine chair of New Rome, was also against St. Cyril and the Cyrillian Council, this made for even more friction as to whether this was a valid council. Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Ephesus were all in accord with the council, but Antioch and Constantinople (the accused) were against it.

To establish order, the council in Ephesus, whose content on the Mariological title *Theotokos* was settled, was disturbed by an imperial intervention in order to bring the factions together. Nestorius capitulated to some form of admission of Mary as Mother of God being acceptable "provided it was properly understood,"[52] and was allowed to retire to Antioch (a point which the pope would take issue with). A certain Maximian was ordained in his place.

There was still an existing problem. The issue left was between St. Cyril and John of Antioch. After the council in Ephesus had been dissolved, negotiations commenced between these two important characters. The famous Formula of Reunion (433)[53] is what squashed the ongoing tussle between these two prelates, which also resulted in John's condemnation of Nestorius. Prior to this, the council was not sure what precisely the official end would be on John. In the conciliar letter to Pope St. Celestine, the bishops left the disciplinary fate of John in the hands of the pope: "We have reserved this to the decision of your holiness."[54] By now, St. Celestine had been succeeded by Pope St. Sixtus III, and the latter accepted the post-synodal Formula of Reunion enacted between St. Cyril and John. In writing to the latter, St. Sixtus states:

> From the outcome of this affair, you have learnt what it means to be in agreement with us. The blessed Apostle Peter, *in his successors*, has handed down what he received.[55]

This harkens back to the mystical idea of Peter continuing to live and preside in his own See, as St. Leo the Great would teach. Not everyone was happy with the reunion, though. Eutherius of Tyana and Helladius of Tarsus, who were Eastern metropolitans who rejected the Formula

[52] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 159.

[53] "Of two natures a union has been made"; see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 161–62.

[54] Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), Letter of the Synod to Pope Celestine, *New Advent*.

[55] Sixtus, Epistle 6, To John, *PL* 50.609, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 261. Sixtus also repeats the old Cyprianic idea that the episcopate began in the person of St. Peter; see Epistle 5, *PL* 1.602–06, as quoted by Kidd in *The Roman Primacy*, 113.

of Reunion, appealed back to the pope requesting further examination. According to the late Anglican scholar Dr. Beresford Kidd, this letter of appeal contained "terms which fully recognize the claims of Rome to intervene in the East"[56] and as one "who has been designated by God to take the helm."[57] These two Eastern hierarchs reached out to Rome and write the following:

> On several occasions Your Apostolic See has sufficed to refute the lie, to reprimand impiety, to reform what needed reform, to protect the Universe, to the greatest glory of Christ, as well under the blessed and *holy bishop Damasus as under several other pontiffs famous and worthy of praise*. . . . We . . . beg you to extend to us a helping hand, to stop the shipwreck of the world and to *command investigation into everything that has happened and to correct those abuses*.[58]

This echoes the Irenaean principle of Rome as the Church with which all must agree and points to St. Damasus as a principal example. So here we have the council itself, reserving the full judgment on the patriarch of Antioch to the pope rather than itself, and then, even after St. Cyril and John found a temporary peace in the Formula of Reunion, two Eastern metropolitans appealed back to Rome for requesting further investigation and a disciplinary correction, showing that the bishop of Rome could literally reopen a shut case even by the force of an ecumenical council.

A peculiar point that is sometimes brought up in the Catholic and Orthodox dialogue is that the bishop of Rome didn't even attend any of the ecumenical councils, let alone play a significant part in its binding authority. The idea here is that since the ecumenical councils were the pinnacle of supreme ecclesiastical authority, the pope is found nowhere in the process. And yet, his absence tells the opposite. It is precisely the authoritative influence of the pope through his legates and letters, all done when he was completely absent, that cause one to wonder just how can a lone bishop of the West carry so much gravitas far out in an

---

[56] Kidd, *The Roman Primacy*, 113.

[57] *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. IV, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin-Leipzig, 1927), 145–48, as quoted in *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy*, by Olivier Clément (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 49 (emphasis added).

[58] Mansi, 5, Synodicon Cassinense, 893–97, as quoted in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, by S. Herbert Scott (Mysterium Co., 2015), 164–65.

Eastern council of almost exclusively Eastern bishops? The statements of the council are clear proof that the Apostolic See is the true president of ecumenical councils, even if he is personally absent.

## Excursus on Papal Supremacy

Some readers might point out how the original decree of Pope St. Celestine should have simply stuck as soon as it was given to Nestorius with no further questions asked. But what ended up happening was a council that met to consider the matter. At first glance, this appears to be a gradual and conciliar process rather than what many Orthodox are expecting to see happen if the papacy were true. Some might observe this as a way to prove that the pope himself didn't have the authority to judge Nestorius and therefore lacked any jurisdiction in the East. In the final analysis, one wonders whether this objection is to be taken seriously. Even if it were the case that the pope could, simply by the stroke of his pen, resolve all disputes, it would not always behoove him to do so. If a pope were to ever try to discipline an Eastern patriarch, for example, with no evidence or just cause whatsoever, this would only prove to be a show of foolishness, and the moral credibility of that pope would be damaged. I would imagine there would be an outcry, and rightly so! It does not matter if Catholics believe that the successor of St. Peter is endowed by Jesus Christ with universal jurisdiction over the whole Church since that Lord who bestowed that authority also said:

> The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. *But not so with you*; rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.[59]

Even Jesus Christ, the King of kings, who possesses universal jurisdiction over all of creation, limits himself, in the dispensation of grace, to exercise that authority only in service to mankind. Only to the degree that one loves the humble Christ can he rightfully exercise primacy over Christians, and this is why before issuing the pastoral commission to

[59] Luke 22:25–27 (emphasis added).

St. Peter to govern the flock, Jesus thrice asked, "Do you love me?" Even aside from the positive imperative given by the Lord above, practical wisdom also prohibits world leaders from brash and draconian leadership. Even the most dictatorial despots throughout history have known that prudence, wisdom, discretion, and diplomacy must be used to govern a realm for both its own and his own welfare.

And yet, is it not the case that many non-Catholic inquirers looking into the evidence of the papacy in the first millennium expect to see just that kind of belly-throwing authority as the bare minimum criteria for true evidence? To demand immediate and unbending obedience in all instances of governance is not even what we can rationally expect from secular dictatorships, let alone the body of Christ. Early Christianity shows a great appreciation for the rule of keeping bishops within their own sphere of jurisdiction, and it was considered a violation of charity to cross boundaries without invitation. This was based upon the principle of subsidiary. What might come as a shock to modern readers is that a pope as prestigious in authority as Pope Pius XI taught that the principle of subsidiary—which holds that authoritative governmental decisions should be performed beginning from the lowest form possible before moving up grades to higher forms of government—is a binding principle in Catholic social teaching on state government:

> Still, that most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. *The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly.* Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully, and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, *as occasion requires and necessity demands.* Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of "subsidiary function," the stronger social authority and

> effectiveness will be the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State.[60]

If this is the case in the secular realm, how much more in the spiritual kingdom of Christ? And if the kingdom of Christ requires charity and justice, then how much more are its pastors bound to abide by the rules of charity and justice? If Christ rules without breaking a bruised reed, how much more would his chief shepherd, the Apostle St. Peter (and his successors), live out this rule of service? Should the real Vicar of Christ act in any way different than Christ? The title would betray that possibility.[61] The papal office should be the most conformed to the likeness of Christ. Therefore, the kind of expectation that certain readers are looking for when sifting through patristic history for "evidence" of the papal primacy should be calibrated with this proper lens. One should not be looking around for a bishop of Rome who is acting the "Big Boss" all the time. Such is a contradiction of the Christian vision of the papacy. St. Gregory the Great rejected the title "Universal Bishop" for "*servus servorum Dei*" (servant of the servants of God). *Chief servant* is the more apt title for St. Peter's successors.

Taking from this binding rule by which all pastors of the Church are to live, the principles of justice would be indispensable to govern the papacy. In other words, while the court of the Apostolic See is the highest court in the universal Church, that court itself is governed by the law of Christ, and the law of Christ involves not only his commandments, but also what can be deduced from natural reason. Consequently, a condemnatory decree against a man (Nestorius) without due process, without evidence to convict, and without a chance for the man to recant would be a violation of those principles. Therefore, in a certain sense, a pope can't just excommunicate someone. Not even God Almighty simply condemns someone for no reason since this would violate his justice.

---

[60] Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, On Reconstruction of Social Order (May 15, 1931), §79, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html. Lest the reader think that this is only applicable by Church doctrine to the state government, Pope Pius XII makes it clear that the principle of subsidiary is valid "also for the life of the Church without prejudice to its hierarchical structure." La elevatezza, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (1957), §49, as quoted from *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, by Thomas P. Rausch (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 206n17. This citation should not be taken as a sign that I agree with the overall arguments of the author, Fr. Thomas P. Rausch, S.J.

[61] In fact, in the early Church, titles such as Vicar of Christ and pontiff were used for all bishops. Even the title "Pope" was used for the bishops of Alexandria and Carthage, besides Rome.

The condemnation of members of the Church of God is a delicate matter and should be handled delicately in order to ensure all the facts of a matter are considered. That process involves working through human channels such as synods, witnesses, corroborating evidence, and plenty more. That is unavoidable even in the standard process of law in worldly countries with despotic regimes. Secondly, the use of synods and councils does not, of itself, suggest that the pope does not possess universal jurisdiction. As we said in the section above on the Catholic view of the papacy, the pope is not omniscient, nor does he automatically know the right answer like a robotic machine (papal automation).

An analogy may be drawn from the Council of Jerusalem (49). The Apostles waited until they conducted a solemn discussion before enacting their dogmatic decree. That they met in a council does not mean the Apostles were not, individually, infallible when it came to disseminating divine Revelation. The Catholic Church teaches they were each, individually, infallible. This is why infallible divine Revelation did not stop until the Apostle John departed this life at the end of the first century. But, despite this, the Apostles still met together to deliberate on the question, and once they reached the decision, it became dogmatic that Gentiles are not required to be circumcised. The bishops at the Fifth Ecumenical Council pitched this principle when criticizing Pope Vigilius for attempting to be, as they mistakenly thought, a one-man council all by himself: "Although the grace of the Holy Spirit abounded in each one of the Apostles, so that *no one of them needed the counsel of another* in the execution of his work, yet they were *not willing to define* on the question then raised touching the circumcision of the Gentiles, *until being gathered together* they had confirmed their own several sayings by the testimony of the divine Scriptures."[62]

This is certainly the model to be followed. In this way, a pope can consult with his brother bishops, which was the *Italian synod of bishops*, an ecumenical council, or some other means before he feels he has confidently faced the issue and is ready to produce a dogmatic decree. None of this militates, necessarily, against the charism of papal infallibility nor his jurisdictional supremacy. But some Orthodox might rebut this and assert that the Church would not have wasted its time with such unnecessary utilities and would have just gone straight to the pope alone to

[62] Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3812.htm (emphasis added).

get things done swiftly and quickly. Since they did not do this, it shows a high probability that the Church Fathers and the bishops of the first millennium were operating contrary to how they would if they held to the substance of the papal dogmas.

Everything said above concerning the nature of papal authority in light of divine Revelation, as well as in light of natural reason as it pertains to wise leadership even among the Gentile nations, should answer this rather unreasonable expectation. A Catholic might also turn this around and say that such utilities as councils, Roman synods, episcopal consensus, and theological consultation were still used for centuries after the Greeks had severed communion with the West because of papal supremacy. In fact, unto this very day, these methods are used. What article of faith or dogmatic definition has ever been issued in the second millennium from the singular action of the pope? None. Would, then, the Orthodox interlocutor suggest that the Catholic West, from the eleventh century to the present, has not held to either papal supremacy or papal infallibility?[63] That is an outlandish assertion if it were made.

One example from the historical record that truly exemplifies what is said above is the excommunication and deposition of the holy John, "the Golden Mouth," Chrysostom[64] by the Eastern Synod of the Oak (402), headed by St. Theophilus of Alexandria. When St. John appealed to Pope St. Innocent (404), modern readers may expect that the latter would have simply overturned the judgment against St. John and pronounced his innocence in a binding decree. However, that is not how the pope responded. One of St. John's disciples, Palladius of Galatia, who most likely wrote the work *The Dialogue of Palladius concerning the Life of St. John Chrysostom*, gives the following description of how the pope responded:

> In answer to this letter, the blessed Pope Innocent sent to each party a formal letter, declaring himself to be in communion with them both, *at the same time nullifying the judgment supposed to have been given by Theophilus*, and

[63] In fact, there had been a debate which became more prominent in the fourteenth century by a group known as the Conciliarists, many of whom posited that a council was above the pope. Many of the Conciliarists were still of the mind that a council's validity depended upon papal ratification but held that doctrinal decrees from the pope could not be given the status of "irreformable" until they were accepted by the whole body of bishops. Despite this, those who argued that *ex cathedra* decrees of the pope were, in themselves, irreformable, won out.

[64] (Χρυσόστομος) means "Golden Mouth."

> stating that another synod, in which full confidence could be placed, of western and eastern bishops, must be summoned, first the friends, and then the enemies, of the respective parties to retire from the assemblage, since as a general rule neither of these gives an *unprejudiced verdict.*[65]

How could we expect the pope to know how to judge this case from the mere letter of St. John and the *Acts* of the Synod of the Oak? The accused and the accuser were both claiming to be in the right. What other recourse than a larger council to review the case? That would be most natural then as it would be most natural even today.

At this point, convening an ecumenical council was left to the emperors to summon and provide the means. However, the Eastern Emperor Arcadius refused to cooperate with his brother Emperor Honorius in the West, and such a council was not convened on behalf of St. John. In fact, when the pope sent legates to the East to arrange such a council, they were brutally treated, and some came close to death.[66] Immediately, the pope broke off communion with the bishops of Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria, all whom had held to the sentence of the Synod of the Oak and refused the entry of St. John's name to their diptychs.[67] After the death of St. John, the pope would not reconcile in communion with the Eastern patriarchs until they inscribed St. John's name into their diptychs.[68] Eventually, all the Eastern patriarchs ended up inscribing

[65] Palladius, *The Dialogue of Palladius Concerning the Life of John Chrysostom*, trans. Herbert Moore (New York: Macmillan Co., 1921), 21–22.

[66] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 81.

[67] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 293. St. Theophilus, somehow, became exonerated of the charges by at least the time of St. Leo the Great, who refers to him in "blessed memory"; see Letters 88 and 129, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604088.htm and https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604129.htm.

[68] J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 286. Theodoret states: "The bishops of the West refused to embrace the communion of the bishops of Egypt, of the East, of the Bosphorus, and in Thrace, until the name of that holy man had been inserted among those of deceased bishops" (Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.34, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 3, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/27025.htm). When Pope St. Innocent was called upon to commune with the Bishop of Constantinople, he refused to give communion until St. John was put onto the diptychs; see Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 294.

St. John's name back into the diptychs of Divine Liturgy and practically submitted to the pope's annulment of the Synod of the Oak. If, as the holy Pope Julius exclaimed, the Eusebian bishops were violating the holy canons of the Church by not awaiting the judgment "of all," and by this he meant the See of Rome preeminently, then surely the bishops and statesmen who orchestrated the Synod of the Oak were also breaking the same laws when they thought they could bypass the review of the Apostolic See. In the sixth century, Pope Vigilius recounted the story of Chrysostom's condemnation by the Eastern synod and gave a resolutely *Roman* interpretation of the events:

> It is a familiar fact that this rule was kept as regards the venerable memory of the saints John bishop of Constantinople, called Chrysostom, and Flavian[69] bishop of the same city, in that, although they were violently deposed, *they were not held to be condemned,* because the Roman presidents preserved their communion inviolate, and *those whom apostolic authority judged to be united to itself inseparably could not, and shall not, be described as cut off from the church.*[70]

This was not merely the Roman view, however. The Greek historians Socrates and Sozomen, as shown earlier, understood that no council which decrees something against the bishop of the church of Rome *has any force.* St. John Chrysostom died knowing this fact, and it would be a point that Pope St. Innocent made plain to his African colleagues during the Pelagian controversy. But the primary point in bringing up this story of the Golden Mouth is to show that the popes will bind themselves to the natural course of inquiry, such as councils and collaborative consensus, and will only leave the sword of excommunication as a last resort. It was made plain above that the pope thought it would be wrong to simply take one side over the other between St. John and his Eastern opponents without a fair hearing from both sides. That is an example of how even a pope is bound to natural reason and self-evident principles.

Somehow, the fierce Orthodox critic Fr. Vladimir Guettée seems to

---

[69] This is St. Flavian, the Bishop of Constantinople, who spearheaded the condemnation of Eutyches and was wrongfully condemned by the Council of Ephesus (449). Clearly, Vigilius understood that the bishop of Rome had the right to annul the sentences of what then was understood as an ecumenical council.

[70] Vigilius, *First Constitutum,* trans. Richard Price, *The Acts of the Councils of Constantinople of 553,* vol. 2 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 190.

take much glee in the fact that Pope St. Innocent resorted to the convocation of an ecumenical council instead of instantaneously deciding the matter without any knowledge of or evidence about the situation, as if the pope would have done precisely this had he been in agreement with the dogma of Vatican I.[71] Again, this is an unnatural expectation and would be tantamount to expecting the popes of Rome to have been more fools than diplomatic wise men. However, when a conciliar course cannot be achieved, the bishops of Rome have the sacred rights in their possession, as successors of St. Peter, to issue decisions which they can enforce over the churches at will, even if it means annulling decrees made at the venue of an ecumenical council. This would be the perpetual claim stretching as far back as St. Julius and working up from him to St. Innocent, St. Boniface, St. Celestine, St. Leo the Great, and finally showing up in a spectacular manner with Pope St. Nicholas the Great against the Byzantine bishops over the election of Photius of Constantinople.

Another Orthodox objection that can be given, albeit less commonly, is that the actions of Pope St. Celestine were simply comparable to the authority of an archbishop or metropolitan over his regional synod, just toward the Council of Ephesus (431). His decisions carried great moral authority, authority which should only be rejected with great delicacy, but they carried no binding authority against those who rejected it. The pope, at best, initiated an investigation into Nestorius, which led to the judgment of the Roman synod. This synod, although carrying the moral weight of the head of the universal Church, required the agreement of the other synods of the universal Church, principally the chief primates of the East, that is, the patriarchs, before it could be considered an officially universal excommunication from the Body of Christ. The major problem with this view is that the pope did not welcome any mediating ratification of his ten-day ultimatum upon the head of Nestorius, and his synod enforced a universal excommunication straightaway regardless of what the Eastern bishops thought. The second problem with this is that the Orthodox Church does not, by and large, hold to this kind of universal metropolitical primacy of jurisdiction. As we covered above in the section on primacy according to the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox patriarchs have been adamant that the See of Rome, while being first in honor, was not head of the universal Church, nor did he possess the authority to judge other bishops without the consent of mediators. The

[71] Fr. Vladimir Guettée, DD, *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867), 140–41.

Encyclical of 1848 said that even the appellate jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome extended *only so far as the Western boundary*. But even if the Sardican canons are proposed to explain the context of St. Celestine upon Nestorius, there was no official synod that condemned Nestorius from which he could have appealed in the first place, according to the letter of the Sardican canons. Rather, the pope gathered his synod together and enacted a doctrinal decree and then put a pending bind of excommunication upon Nestorius which he felt would carry weight, not just for Rome and the West but for the East as well. A regional synod held under a metropolitan or patriarch can only enact binding decrees according to its own capacity, which can only extend as far as the region of bishops of which that synod comprises. Pope Celestine's Roman synod enacted a decree of excommunication which was universal, as we saw. It did not seek the agreement of anyone else before its binding lock fell upon Nestorius.

What makes the Roman synod different than any other synod is that the Lord gave to St. Peter a direct and immediate command to "care" for all the churches. In contrast, it is unknown in Orthodoxy today to base universal primacy on St. Peter. Even if there were some Orthodox who tried to argue that the pope carried this high level of universal jurisdiction, albeit less than immediate, the basis upon which this Orthodox interpreter would say this primacy derived *could not be the same basis that Pope St. Celestine explained*. As we saw, Celestine based his universal primacy on the divine investiture given by the Lord to St. Peter and his successors whereas the Orthodox, even those who give serious concession to high papal claims, do not believe Rome owes her primacy to this.

I think the more reasonable alternative for the Orthodox is to simply dismiss St. Celestine as making a baseless or exaggerative theologoumena, and that these falsehoods were more clearly corrected when the East declared its independence from Rome in the second millennium. Even Orthodox historian Fr. John McGuckin recognized that the pope held that his decrees were authoritatively sufficient to intervene in Eastern affairs.[72] The East, according to him, never held to this mindset and preferred the method of canonical synodality. While stretching the limits, he goes on to say that, during St. Celestine's time, the only place where papal sovereignty was held was "the Roman chancery itself,"[73] which means the pope's *court and office*. In his reading of the sources,

[72] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 43.

[73] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 43n88.

Fr. McGuckin believes the tale of a Roman primacy on the basis of its apostolicity and succession from St. Peter was simply a "theologoumenon"[74] rejected by the East. Instead of trying to squeeze these early popes into some sort of Eastern Orthodox paradigm, Fr. McGuckin recognizes that from "the earliest times, the difference of ecclesiology led to a different view between Rome and the Eastern churches over episcopal rights of intervention in other churches. The issue continues to the present day in the division between the Orthodox and Roman communions."[75]

McGuckin, then, essentially holds to the theory that two divergent ecclesiologies already existed in the first millennium as far back as prior to the Council of Chalcedon (451), but he seems to take no notice that the Roman view of primacy is in the official *Acts* of Ephesus (431) in addition to other councils. According to Fr. John H. Erickson, another Orthodox Church historian, "Primacy arises not from 'apostolicity' understood in the strictly historical sense, *as Rome would claim*, but from that 'principle of accommodation' of church organization to the structures of civil government."[76] Dr. Ed Siecienski, leading the way now in studies of Byzantine Orthodoxy and the papacy, admits that the Orthodox Church, in contrast to Catholicism, "has seen things differently, believing that Rome's primacy was granted not by Christ, *but by the councils*, and then only because it was at the time capital of the empire."[77] Three outstanding voices in Orthodox scholarship all agree on the non-apostolic cause of Roman primacy.

To the contrary, Rome would hold that she received a singular privilege, not common to anyone else, of having the sacred rights invested by Christ in St. Peter endowed upon her by a legal form of succession. The clearest proof that even the *Orthodox-papalist* position, which seeks to vest today's Constantinople with a universal jurisdictional primacy in parallel to Old Rome, does not require a divinely appointed commission by Christ and that it can all rest upon a canonical institution of the post-Apostolic church. And if it is instituted from the canons, the whole system is to be derived from the Church, and thus mediated through the Church's structures. But it is precisely the fact that Christ himself, and not through the Church, gave a direct command and a singular privilege

[74] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 43n89.

[75] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 43n89.

[76] Fr. John Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 80.

[77] A. Edward Siecienski, *Orthodox Christianity: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 72–74.

upon St. Peter's person, to be taken up the same by his successors, that renders the jurisdiction to be immediate and direct in relation to the universal Church. As Pope St. Paul VI wrote:

> In this Church of Christ the Roman pontiff, as the successor of Peter, *to whom Christ entrusted the feeding* of His sheep and lambs, enjoys supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority over the care of souls by divine institution. Therefore, as pastor of all the faithful, *he is sent to provide* for the common good of the universal Church and for the good of the individual churches. Hence, he holds a primacy of *ordinary* power over all the churches.[78]

It is very crucial to understand here that St. Paul VI is deriving the "ordinary" attribute of power to the Roman Pontiff because of St. Peter's being directly "entrusted" and "sent" by Christ our God himself. If God entrusted and sent St. Peter to be the universal pastor, then there is no entrustment or sending that the Church does for the Roman Pontiff, as if the primacy of Rome were like that of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, or Jerusalem. These later sees were entrusted by the Church with certain canonical prerogative. The Roman See is unique, according to Roman Catholic doctrine. If it were the case, as the Orthodox hold, that the Roman primacy is derived solely from canons, then her primacy would be something entrusted or sent by the Church, and thus mediate, indirect, partial, and extraordinary. It would be regulated, diminished, modified, or even extended by the power of the Church. According to Catholic doctrine, the founding principles of the Roman primacy are of a different nature, and therefore it is defined differently.

Another point of curiosity that the Orthodox have had in the past is over the issue of how one particular bishop, the bishop of Rome, can obtain a divinely instituted presidency over all other bishops if he, like all other bishops, is a recipient of one and the same sacrament of Holy Orders. How can a unique difference of authority be possessed by the Roman bishop if he, like everyone, comes from the same fountain of episcopal consecration? The answer to this question also explains why the pope's primacy, in Catholic theology, is ordinary and immediate. If it were the case that Christ the Lord established an apostolate of equal

[78] Pope Paul VI, *Christus Dominus*, Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, Preface (emphasis added), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html.

members, then the episcopate would be precisely the same thing, namely, a governmental organization of equal members. Ordination for each bishop would give the same exact power and authority. The Apostles would be equals, and so the bishops would be equals. Any primacy or presidency of one bishop over others would be by a canonical assignment created by the Church, per Orthodox polity. However, in Catholic theology, Christ created a college for the Apostles. As a college, it is made up of two tiers: head and members. In other words, the Apostolic College was an institutional entity that had in its essential make up the separation of headship and membership. Bringing the Twelve into this college naturally put one, St. Peter, in the office of head, and the other eleven into the office of membership.

Episcopal consecration would be simply to bring a man into this college. If one enters St. Peter's office, that is, which is stationed in the Roman bishopric, then episcopal ordination for that one would entail entrance into the headship tier of the episcopal college, and thus the pope doesn't get his headship from the sacrament but from the inherent collegial structure of the episcopal college. Otherwise, episcopal consecration puts all into the membership department. As far as the ordination itself, all obtain the same power and authority as bishops. The Roman bishop, *as bishop*, is the same as any bishop of any other diocese. However, since the Roman bishop happens to merge together with St. Peter's office of head, an office which was created by Christ as built into the apostolate, then the Roman bishop, *as Roman* bishop, has an entirely different set of prerogatives than any other bishop. By this schema, the bishop of Rome is equal, as bishop, to all others, and his ordination to Holy Orders is precisely the same as all others. However, because his ordination into the episcopate happens to land him in St. Peter's office, which is also constitutional with the college's own essential make-up, he obtains a primacy over all other bishops by his lawful succession to St. Peter's Chair. Pope St. Paul VI speaks further to this:

> By virtue of *sacramental consecration* and *hierarchical communion* with the *head and members* of the *college*, bishops are constituted as members of the *episcopal body*. "The order of bishops is the successor to the *college of the apostles* in teaching and pastoral direction, or rather, *in the episcopal order, the apostolic body continues without a break*. Together with its head, the Roman Pontiff, and never without this head it exists as the subject of supreme, plenary power over

> the universal Church But this power cannot be exercised except with the agreement of the Roman pontiff."[79]

From this conception, we can see that the structure of the "body" of the Apostolic College precedes the individual Apostles. Likewise, since the episcopal college is the successor to the Apostolic College, the same "body" structure pertains to the episcopal order. That is, of both head and members. Therefore, the position of the Roman Pontiff, in Catholic thought, is not a leadership position at the top that reaches from without toward the subordinates beneath. Rather, the position of the pope is internal to all the members of the episcopate, since he occupies a position which is intrinsic to the episcopal body itself. As Fr. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger said, "This *interiority* of the bishop of Rome's ministry *to each particular Church* is also an expression of the *mutual interiority* between universal Church and particular Church."[80] The authority of the Roman Pontiff, therefore, is built into the episcopate in its essence. Archbishop Michael J. Miller gives a straightforward definition of what it means for the pope's jurisdiction to be without mediation:

> Papal jurisdiction is not delegated by the college of cardinals, who elect the pope, nor by the college of bishops, of which he is the head, nor by the body of the faithful, of whom he is the supreme pastor. Papal authority comes *directly from Christ*, bestowed by him alone at the moment of accepting election. The pope's primacy of jurisdiction *is not, therefore, mediated through any other body in the Church*. . . . This way of describing the primacy of jurisdiction rules out any theory which proposes that the pope must first consult or seek the permission of the local bishop before exercising his jurisdiction outside the diocese of Rome.[81]

In a very similar way, the pope's jurisdiction as "ordinary" versus "extraordinary" comes from the fact that the "pope's power resides in him

---

[79] Pope Paul VI, *Christus Dominus*, §6–7 (emphasis added).

[80] Joseph Ratzinger, The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church, §6, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19981031_primato-successore-pietro_en.html (emphasis added).

[81] J. Michael Miller, C.S.B, *The Shepherd and the Rock: Origins, Development, and Mission of the Papacy* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1995), 152–53 (emphasis added).

by virtue of his divinely given charge; he does not receive it by delegation from any earthly authority."[82] In other words, the pope "has all the necessary ecclesial power" in "order to carry out his mission to the universal Church," as one who was given this prerogative directly in the person of St. Peter.[83] Therefore, the objection which some Orthodox might lodge because the papal prerogatives do not come through the Sacrament of Ordination, per se, does not render them coming from the Church or from a human source. What you have is an internal structure, created by Christ, defined by a division between head and members, and then a common Sacrament of Holy Orders, which puts someone in either the members office of the college or the head office of the college.

So here you have a convergence of two divine elements in the ordination or election of someone to papal office. Moreover, the jurisdiction given to the successor of the headship of the episcopal order is both immediate and ordinary by virtue of its commissioner, Christ our God himself. This aligns with the overwhelming patristic rationale for the foundation of the Roman primacy.

## Pope St. Leo the Great (400–461)

The next era of consideration is the time of Pope St. Leo the Great, in whom "supreme judicial authority was distinctly asserted."[84] If it were not clear by now that the popes of Rome held to the basic foundations of what went into dogmatic formula at the First Vatican Council going back to the fourth century, all doubts about that are cleared away with St. Leo. This is admitted by the breadth of scholarship. According to Fr. Louis Bouyer, in St. Leo "the entire teaching of the First Vatican Council was already substantially there, particularly since Leo refers to the universal and sovereign authority of the bishop of Rome over the Church, and over other bishops, with all its consequences for the power of determining orthodox doctrine without the possibility of appeal to any other authority on earth."[85] Such a statement from a Catholic Jesuit might not be as eye-catching, in light of the obvious. Thankfully, the clarity of this pope does not permit mistaking even by Protestants.

---

[82] Miller, *The Shepherd and the Rock*, 153.

[83] Miller, *The Shepherd and the Rock*, 153.

[84] George P. Fisher, *History of Christian of Doctrine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), 124.

[85] Louis Bouyer, *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 33.

According to the late historical theologian J. G. Davis, St. Leo held that "supreme authority was bestowed by Jesus upon Peter. . . . [H]e held Peter to have been the first bishop of Rome, and his authority to have been *perpetuated in his successors*."[86] In St. Leo, according to Protestant historian Philip Schaff, "the idea of the papacy, as it were, became flesh and blood."[87] St. Leo "anticipated all the dogmatical arguments by which the power of the papacy was subsequently established."[88] As for whether St. Peter was given a primacy of jurisdiction versus honor, Schaff interprets St. Leo as believing that Peter was "the pastor and prince of the whole Church, through whom Christ exercises his universal dominion on earth."[89]

Was this primacy of jurisdiction limited to the apostolic era? Certainly not, for "this primacy, however, is not limited to the apostolic age, but like the faith of Peter, and like the church herself, it perpetuates itself; and it perpetuates itself through the bishops of Rome, who are related to Peter as Peter was related to Christ. As Christ in Peter, so Peter in his successors lives and speaks and perpetually executes the commission: 'Feed My sheep.'"[90]

Resistance to papal authority, for St. Leo, is a "sure way to hell,"[91] and obedience to the pope, therefore, "is necessary for salvation."[92] Needless to say, Schaff repudiates the whole notion altogether as a falsehood. For him, St. Leo's doctrine would exclude all Protestant and Greek Christianity and is therefore refuted by its "impracticability."[93] Another Protestant historian, equally critical of the papal claims, admits that between St. Leo's consciousness and the First Vatican Council the papacy underwent "little modification,"[94] and St. Leo's basic theory was "to be found set forth by the Vatican Council,"[95] which was the combination of a primacy of jurisdiction, the perpetuation of it, and its extension to the universal Church.[96]

---

[86] J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 331 (emphasis added).

[87] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600 (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1870), 317.

[88] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, 317.

[89] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 317.

[90] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 317.

[91] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 319.

[92] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 319.

[93] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 319.

[94] Kidd, *The Roman Primacy*, 153.

[95] Kidd, *The Roman Primacy*, 153.

[96] Kidd, *The Roman Primacy*, 154–54.

The Anglican historian J. W. C. Wand states that St. Leo "was fully persuaded that as successor and mystical impersonator of Peter, the Pope was *supreme over all Churches*."[97] Upon entering into the papal office, say Protestant critics Kenneth J. Collins and Jerry Walls, St. Leo "began to assert his *supremacy over all other bishops*."[98] Even the late Anglican Edward Denny, who was the fiercest Englishman to war against the papacy in the mid to late nineteenth century, admitted that in St. Leo is found "the germ which ultimately developed in those claims to be Absolute Monarch over the Church, *which are embodied in the Vatican Decrees and the* Satis Cognitum."[99] W. H. C. Frend writes that in St. Leo, we see the "initiative, executive power, and the ultimate decision on matters of doctrine."[100] Protestant scholarship seems rather clear on the matter. Contrast this with the self-styled "unbiased" gloss of Abbé Fr. Vladimir Guettée on St. Leo's ecclesiology.[101]

Of all that St. Leo wrote, some select sermons together with his epistolary exchanges with the Eastern churches are all one needs to see his understanding of the papacy. In turn, many prominent characters who were contemporaries with St. Leo also bear witness to the papacy. Succinctly put, the Leonine principle of primacy is the assertion that the universal Church is under the divine protection of Christ, but this protection is ordered by him through a hierarchical episcopal government whose apex is the Apostle Peter. Divine assistance comes from Christ the Head through St. Peter, the earthly head, and then, continuing through St. Peter to the Apostles, and through the Apostles to the whole Church universal. This divine assistance is described with the imagery of a foundation rock. Christ himself is the original true Foundation Rock, but St. Peter is made the foundation rock (*petros*) of the Church as derived from Christ. In turn, the rock-ness of St. Peter then fortifies the universal Church such that the universal Church becomes a rock herself. Moreover, this solidity comes through the application of the truth of divine

[97] J. C. W. Wand, *A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 237 (emphasis added).

[98] Kenneth J. Collins and Jerry Walls, *Roman but not Catholic: What Remains at Stake 500 Years after the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 205 (emphasis added).

[99] Edward Denny, *Papalism: A Treatise on the Claims of the Papacy as Set Forth in the Encyclical Satis Cognitum* (London: Rivingtons, 1912), 94 (emphasis added).

[100] W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 225.

[101] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 97–102 and 154–56. Although, see *The Papacy*, 241, where Guettée accuses St. Leo of exaggerating the level of his authority and also incorrectly rooting that authority in a succession from St. Peter.

Revelation, thereby tying together what it means to be the rock and the right confession of faith. Leo unpacks this herein:

> Furthermore, there is also another reason for this celebration—not only the apostolic but also the episcopal dignity of blessed Peter who has not ceased to preside over his see and *continues an ongoing sharing with the eternal Priest.* For the solidity which he, having been made Peter the rock, *received from Christ the rock, has passed on to his heirs.*[102]

Here, by "heirs" is meant St. Peter's successors. But one can see how St. Leo understood Christ as the true Rock and Peter as rock by derivation from Christ. And then, the strength of that rock-ness is passed on to St. Peter's successors. Thus, there is an "ongoing sharing" between Christ, St. Peter, and his successors. Share in what and for what purpose? As revealed below, it is a share in the divine government of the Church. Yet another Protestant patristics scholar Robert F. Evans summarizes the Leonine concept in these words:

> The plenary powers of the pope rest upon plenary powers given *in the first instance* to the Apostle Peter, who received such powers for his merit in having been the first of the Apostles to confess Jesus as the Christ. . . . To Peter is entrusted the government of the Church. This government includes both jurisdictional and doctrinal elements. Jurisdictionally it means that Peter receives the "power of binding and loosing," *complete authority over all disciplinary matters regulating the holding of Church offices and the conditions upon which men either are or are not in communion with the Church.* Doctrinally Peter founded the teaching of the Christian Church "by his uniform preaching throughout the world." . . . In bestowing upon Peter his commission, Christ takes Peter up into an "undivided union" with himself; Christ the Rock ordains that Peter also be Rock made solid by Christ's own strength, "so that those things which are proper to my own power might be common to you by participation with me."[103]

[102] Pope Leo, Sermon 5, as quoted in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Robert B. Eno, SS (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1984), 162.

[103] Robert F. Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1972),

This concept is to be slightly distinguished from Cyprianism since St. Leo "makes a crucial distinction, quite alien to Cyprian's equally juristic view of the matter: the Apostles possess a common *honor* (that of the episcopal order), but not an identical *potestas* (jurisdictional power). . . . Peter in an immediate sense rules all of the Church's pastors, whom Christ rules in a more ultimate and prior sense."[104] Evans sees the rule bestowed upon St. Peter, as reflected in St. Leo's thought, to be immediate and without any mediatorial go-between. In this instance, Evans is seeing the groundwork for the "immediate" jurisdictional primacy of the pope endorsed by the First Vatican Council. In another sermon, St. Leo writes:

> And still out of the whole world, only Peter is chosen. He is put before the calling of all nations and at the head of all the Apostles and all the Fathers of the Church. Although in the people of God there are many bishops and many pastors, *Peter in his own right governs all whom Christ rules as the head.* Dearly beloved, God in his goodness has granted to this man a great and marvelous sharing in His power and if He wished that other rulers have something in common with him, he never gave anything to others *unless he gave it through him* (Peter).[105]

In no uncertain terms, St. Leo saw St. Peter as governor of the universal Church because of this "ongoing sharing" or participation in Christ's government of the Church. This saint of Eastern and Western veneration was transparent that while Christ rules the Church from heaven, he rules through the regency of St. Peter and his heirs.[106] If other pastors and bishops receive a share in the government of the Church in their respective dioceses, it is from Christ through St. Peter. He goes on in the same sermon:

> "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven . . ." (Mt 16:19). The right to exercise this power has indeed passed on to the other Apostles and the institution sprung from

136–37 (emphasis added).

[104] Evans, *One and Holy*, 137.

[105] Leo, Sermon 4, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 138.17–21 in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Eno, 161.

[106] B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church* (London: Helicon Press, 1962), 78.

> this decision has reached out to all the chiefs of the Church *but it was not in vain that what was announced to all was entrusted to one.*[107]

As many Orthodox have pointed out, the New Testament teaches that the power of the keys can be exercised by all the Apostles, and, in turn, all the leaders of the Church. In the patristic corpus, we also learn that bishops exercise the keys to the kingdom, and even presbyters can as well. St. Leo was not ignorant of this. And yet, "It was not *in vain* that what was announced *to all* was entrusted *to one*."

If the unique singularity of St. Peter and the keys was not a "vain" inclusion into St. Matthew's Gospel, then what is the significance? Christ has arranged a hierarchical order through which he will govern and care for the Church, and he has chosen St. Peter (and his successors) to be the recipient of special promises, prayers, and prerogatives for the benefit of all. In that sense, the keys of the kingdom are not for each to take for himself and claim equal authority with everyone else. Rather, all must adhere and submit to one head. Once again, we see this pattern in Leonine thought where the ultimate Rock (Christ) fortifies Peter with his own solidity thereby making Peter a rock, and then, underneath the solidity of Peter, the whole universal Church is fortified. We may call this a *Petrine paradigm*.

By way of summarizing, from one universal Head (Christ), there is established a vicariate universal head (St. Peter); from this one head, the several heads underneath are points of unity for their respective pastoral regions. Thus, from Christ and through St. Peter, the whole Church is strengthened in one bond of unity. This comes out very clearly in one epistle that St. Leo wrote to Emperor Leo after the Council of Chalcedon, insisting that the doctrinal question of Chalcedon cannot be reopened:

> Since, therefore, the *universal Church has become a rock* (*petra*) through the building up of that *original Rock*, and the *first of the Apostles*, the most blessed Peter heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock (*petra*) I will build My Church," who is there who dare assail such impregnable strength, unless he be either antichrist or the devil.[108]

[107] B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church*, 78.

[108] Leo, Epistle 156, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature

Who could mistake that St. Leo saw here a transferring of the original solid strength from Christ to St. Peter and then from St. Peter to the universal Church? Contextually, what St. Leo was saying was that Christ has provided strength to the Church through his Tome given to the Council of Chalcedon. Therefore, he understood the strength of the rock to include doctrinal infallibility. This comes out in another sermon:

> The Apostle Peter, by the revelation of the most High Father passing beyond things corporeal and surmounting things human by the eyes of his mind, saw Him to be the Son of the living God, and acknowledged the glory of the Godhead, because he looked not at the substance of His flesh and blood alone; and with this *lofty faith* Christ was so well pleased that he received the fullness of blessing, and was *endued with the holy firmness of the inviolable Rock* on which the Church should be built and conquer the gates of hell and the laws of death, so that, in loosing or binding the petitions of any whatsoever, *only that should be ratified in heaven which had been settled by the judgment of Peter.*[109]

St. Leo explained further on what he meant when he described how Christ had foretold of St. Peter's thrice denial, and how he promised to pray for Simon Peter specifically:

> "But I have prayed for you, that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers." . . . The danger from the temptation to fear was common to all the Apostles and all had equal need of the aid of divine protection since the Devil wished to upset them all and cause them to fall. And yet the Lord shows a *special care* for Peter and *prays in particular for the faith of Peter*, as if the future situation would be more secure for the others if the spirit of the leader remained unconquered. Thus in Peter the courage of all is fortified and the aid of divine grace is so arranged that

Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604156.htm.

[109] Leo, Sermon 51, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360351.htm.

> *the strength which comes to Peter through Christ, through Peter is transmitted to the Apostles.*[110]

One observation to be taken from here is that the strength of the rock is defined in terms of a "lofty faith," but then St. Leo quickly situates this faith as perpetually embodied in the holy man Peter and, as the other citations make clear, his successors as well. In yet another sermon, Leo comes across even more explicitly:

> The dispensation of truth therefore abides, and the blessed Peter *preserving in the strength of the rock*, which he has received, has not abandoned the helm of the Church, which he undertook. For he was ordained before the rest in such a way that from his being called the Rock, from his being pronounced the Foundation, from his being constituted the Doorkeeper of the kingdom of heaven, from his being set as the Umpire to bind and to loose, whose judgments shall retain their validity in heaven, *from all these mystical titles we might know the nature of his association with Christ.* . . . And so if anything is rightly done and rightly decreed by us, if anything is won from the mercy of God by our daily supplications, *it is of his work and merits whose power lives and whose authority prevails in his See.*[111]

The mystical titles given to St. Peter are to signify the kind of association he has with Christ, which harkens back to that "ongoing sharing" referred to above. And lest one think that the idea of each bishop being an equal successor of St. Peter (i.e., bearing the form of Peter) resonated with St. Leo, his following words render it impossible:

> And so, dearly beloved, with reasonable obedience we celebrate to-day's festival by such methods, that *in my humble person* he may be recognized and honoured, in whom

[110] Leo, Sermon 4, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 138.17–21 in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Eno, 161–62.

[111] Leo, Sermon 3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360303.htm.

> abides the *care of all the shepherds*,[112] together with the *charge of the sheep commended to him*, and *whose dignity is not abated even in so unworthy an heir*.[113]

The dignity of St. Peter is not "abated" even in his unworthy successors, one of which St. Leo made an unmistakable claim to be. This is also equivalent to the distinction made between the office and the person in office. For St. Leo, Peter's office retains its privileges even when the person occupying it is unworthy. One wonders in utter amazement at how Abbé Fr. Vladimir Guettée could say that "St. Leo does not pretend that St. Peter's power, whatever it was, passed to the bishops of Rome."[114] That is so much at the end of St. Leo's pen that such an observation is simply inexplicable. More in support of this basic assumption comes from St. Leo's epistles. The first is a letter written to the bishops of the province of Vienne concerning St. Hilary of Arles:

> But this mysterious function the Lord wished to be indeed the concern of all the Apostles, but in such a way that He has placed Peter, chief of all the Apostles: *and from him as from the Head wishes His gifts to flow to all the body*: so that *any one who dares to secede from Peter's solid* rock may understand that he has *no part or lot in the divine mystery*. For He wished him who had been received into *partnership* in His *undivided unity to be named what He Himself was, when He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church."*[115]

For St. Leo, "To be under the authority of Peter," writes Cambridge historian Eamon Duffy, "was simply to be under the authority of Christ, and to repudiate the authority of Peter was to put oneself outside the mystery of Christ."[116] Moreover, St. Leo's "sense of this identity was almost mystical. Peter was eternally present in Peter's see, and Leo, though an

---

[112] The pastoral care and leadership of shepherds, i.e., metropolitans and bishops.

[113] Leo, Sermon 3, *New Advent*.

[114] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 155–56.

[115] Pope Leo, Letter 10, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604010.htm.

[116] Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, third ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 43.

'unworthy heir,' as the inheritor of all Peter's prerogatives. Indeed, Peter himself spoke and acted in all that Leo did."[117] Once again, we see the pattern (Christ-Peter-Apostles-Church). These words were written in the context of a warning to St. Hilary, who himself was a metropolitan which, too, bore the figure of St. Peter on the metropolitical level. And yet, St. Leo knew that the Petrine succession in Rome is the Petrine center par excellence, and from it, all other Peter's would be validated or invalidated as such.

If all bishops and metropolitans, each carrying the figure of St. Peter in their respective capacities, carried the same exact significance, then St. Leo's words here would be absolutely nonsensical. Therefore, the Petrine significance of the Roman bishop was different and superior over and above all others, a point which was made clear by St. Optatus. If the origin of authority comes from the top, Jesus Christ, and works downward through St. Peter's See in Rome unto all the bishops, then likewise, threats to the unity of the Church among the bishops must, for their prevention, refer back to St. Peter so that a supreme arbiter can consolidate and unify the masses. This is explained in another epistle:

> The connection of the whole body makes all alike healthy, all alike beautiful: and this connection requires the unanimity indeed of the whole body, but it especially demands harmony among the priests. And though they have a common dignity, yet they have not uniform rank; inasmuch as even among the blessed Apostles, notwithstanding the similarity of their honourable estate, there was a certain *distinction of power*, and while the election of them all was equal, yet *it was given to one to take the lead of the rest.* From which model has arisen a distinction between bishops also, and by an important ordinance it has been provided that every one should not claim everything for himself: but that there should be in each province *one whose opinion should have the priority among the brethren:* and again that certain whose appointment is in the greater cities should undertake a fuller responsibility, through whom the care of the universal Church should *converge towards Peter's one seat, and nothing anywhere should be separated from its Head.*[118]

[117] Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 43.

[118] Leo, Letter 14, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature

This passage comes as a bit of surprise since here St. Leo recognized the principle of accommodation between Church order and the geo-political organization of the Roman Empire. The "greater cities" will hold the metropolitan who will have "greater responsibility" and "priority among the brethren." However, all of this is subordinate to Rome, not because of its being the capital of the empire, but because it was the historical post of St. Peter when he died to leave it to his successor. This is especially important since some might have interpreted St. Leo to have such a high regard for the apostolic foundation for ecclesial primacy that he seemed to be ignorant of the principle of political accommodation. But, as is shown, he was aware of both the apostolic principle, the Petrine principle in particular, and the political accommodation, and refused to see them as contradiction.

All in all, the Leonine theory of papal primacy stands in stark contrast to the sort of "first among equals" polity that the Eastern patriarchs taught in their famous encyclical (1848). There, and in the second one published in 1895, an earthly head of the universal Church is purported to be already a violation of tradition. The Eastern Orthodox are echoed in the words of the late Anglican anti-papalist Frederick W. Puller:

> But the mere fact that the notion of an earthly head should be seriously entertained was a token of how grievously the Church had fallen from her primitive fullness of realization of the things unseen.[119]

There is still more to be said about the papal consciousness of St. Leo the Great that would certainly contrast him with the popes in future centuries. As we observed from his insistence that the canons of ecumenical councils could not be altered, even ones not strictly dealing with divine law on faith or morals (i.e., the sixth canon of Nicaea), St. Leo was very much a self-proclaimed observer of the canons as if they were the rule to govern himself and the whole Church universal. Even with this detail, however, he seemed to think the authority of the Apostolic See could issue decrees which were leveled with the authority of the canons. In a letter to Western bishops, he wrote:

---

Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604014.htm.

[119] F. W. Puller, *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 221.

> But lest there be anything which may possibly be thought to be omitted by us, we bid you, beloved, to keep all the *decretal rules* of Innocent of blessed memory, and also of *all our predecessors*, which have been promulgated about the orders of the Church and the *discipline of the canons*, and to keep them in such wise that if any have transgressed them he may know at once that *all indulgence is denied him.*[120]

Going back to at least the year 400 with Pope St. Innocent, St. Leo understood that certain binding decrees were issued that require obedience. When he said "all our predecessors," he undoubtedly meant to include the great decretal of Pope St. Siricius (384) which said: "*No priest of the Lord is free to be ignorant of the statutes of the Apostolic See.*" St. Leo's successor, St. Hilary, presided over a council in Rome (465) and gave an allocution which included the threat of spiritual peril that would befall someone who violated "either the divine constitutions *or the decrees of the Apostolic See.*"[121] Whatever else might be said, it is certain that St. Leo understood the conciliar canons made at an ecumenical council to be irreformable, and this, probably, is to be held in contrast with popes of later centuries.[122]

St. Leo also understood that the primacy of Rome had been divinely instituted and its jurisdictional prerogative to be immediate from Christ and immediate toward all the Churches of the world. To this point, St. Leo wrote to Anastasius of Thessalonica: "You, imitating our gentleness, might assist us in *the care which we owe* primarily to *all* the churches *by divine institution.*"[123] Note how he says "owe." This is not a matter of pure charity or a volunteer service. Rather, the successor to St. Peter "owes" something to the universal Church. He is in debt to all the churches *by divine institution* (i.e., God's command). Perhaps the clearest explanation of this comes from a different epistle written to the bishops of Sicily:

---

[120] Leo, Letter 4, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604004.htm (emphasis added).

[121] Andreas Thiel, *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a s. Hilaro usque ad Pelagium II* (Vatican City: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1970), No. 13, as quoted in *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 314 (emphasis added).

[122] Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 231.

[123] Leo, Letter 14, *New Advent*.

> By God's precepts and the Apostle's admonitions we are incited to keep a *careful watch* over the state of all the churches: and, if anywhere ought is found that needs rebuke, to recall men with speedy care either from the stupidity of ignorance or from forwardness and presumption. For inasmuch as we are warned by the *Lord's own command* whereby the blessed Apostle Peter had the thrice repeated mystical injunction pressed upon him, that he who loves Christ should *feed Christ's sheep, we are* compelled by reverence for that see which, by the abundance of the divine grace, we hold, to shun the danger of sloth as much as possible.[124]

This *Petrine watchtower* theme pervades the thinking of St. Leo. But the reason is all too consistent: the mystical office of being shepherd to feed the flock of Christ was given to St. Peter, and by way of succession, the See of Peter is responsible for continuing to feed the universal Church. This requires actions to be taken which will necessarily entail intervening into affairs anywhere in the world. The Roman See functions like a designated *lookout* ensuring the well-being of the churches. St. Leo writes elsewhere: "It informs us . . . by a *consideration of our office*, so that being placed, as it were, *on a watch-tower*, according to the will of the Lord, we should lend our approval to things when they run in accordance with our wishes, and correct, by applying the *remedies of compulsion*,[125] what we observe gone wrong through any aggression."[126] Again, the consequences of inaction are not merely a failure to charitably volunteer in the affairs of other churches but are sinful on account of the Lord's charge to the pope in blessed Peter:

> And if we do not repress such things with the vigilance we ought, *we cannot excuse ourselves to Him who intended us to be watchmen*, for permitting the pure body of the Church,

[124] Leo, Letter 16, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604016.htm.

[125] This refers to authoritative interventions which require subjects to obey commands issued by the Apostolic See.

[126] Leo, Letter 6, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604006.htm.

> which we ought to keep clean from every stain, to be defiled by contact with wicked schemers.[127]

These claims go directly contrary to those who have attempted to read the statements on papal primacy by Pope St. Leo as his attempt to fill in the void which had been created by the fall of the empire in the West or other like challenges.[128] This would certainly call his honesty into question, whatever else it does to undermine his holiness. As for calling his accuracy into question, his clarity is enough such that the Anglican critic H. Burn-Murdoch could describe St. Leo's position on ecclesial primacy as a development of "Rome's simple primitive primacy into something utterly different, unwarranted by Scripture, unheard-of in the first centuries of the Church."[129] Even if Murdoch were right, it seems that he, as a Protestant historian, testifies to the clarity with which St. Leo speaks on the subject. What St. Leo had to say concerning the origin, nature, and extent of his jurisdiction was sufficiently stated by the renowned Russian Orthodox philosopher Vladimir Solovyev, and his interpretation can be calculated just as free from bias as Murdoch:

> The ultimate warrant and sanction of this "mighty design of Providence" consists, according to St. Leo, in the fact that the one head of the Church, with whom the rights and obligations of all are bound up, does not owe his power to the *ordinance of man* or to the *accidents of history*, but represents the impregnable rock of truth and justice laid down *by the Lord* Himself as the foundation of His social structure. It is no more consideration of expediency, but the *ratio pietatis* which is invoked by him *who has received the government of the whole Church e divina institutione.*[130]

Astonishingly, St. Leo found such a prominent place in the patrimony of the Orthodox Church. In the hymnographical tradition, the Orthodox have *troparia* and a *kontakion* for Leo:[131]

---

[127] Leo, Letter 4, *New Advent.*

[128] Contra George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), 2.

[129] H. Burn-Murdoch, *The Development of the Papacy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), 234.

[130] Vladimir Solovyev, *Russia and the Universal Church* (London: Geoffrey Bles—The Centenary Press, 1948), 126.

[131] "St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome: Troparion and Kontakion," *Orthodox Church in America,*

Troparion—Tone 3

> You were the Church's instrument / in strengthening the teaching of true doctrine; / you shone forth from the West like a sun *dispelling the errors of the heretics.* / Righteous Leo, entreat Christ God to grant us His great mercy.

Troparion—Tone 8

> O Champion of Orthodoxy, and teacher of holiness, / The enlightenment of the universe and the *inspired glory of true believers.* / O most wise Father Leo, your teachings are as *music of the Holy Spirit for us*! / Pray that Christ our God may save our souls!

Kontakion—Tone 3

> Seated upon the throne of the priesthood, glorious Leo, / you shut the mouths of the spiritual lions. / With divinely inspired teachings of the honored Trinity, / *you shed the light of the knowledge of God* upon your flock. / Therefore, you are glorified as a divine initiate of the grace of God.

St. Leo is also mentioned in the *Synodikon of Orthodox*, composed by an Eastern synod held in 843, which is prayed by all Orthodox on the first Sunday of Orthodox Lent. The Orthodox include the following anathema in the prayer:

> Anathema . . . to them who reject the teachings which were pronounced for the establishment of the true doctrines of the Church of God by the Holy Fathers Athanasios, Cyril, Ambrose, Amphilochios the God-proclaiming, *Leo the most holy Archbishop of Old Rome.*[132]

In the first session of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553), the following is confessed:

> We further declare that we hold fast to the decrees of the four Councils, and in every way follow the holy Fathers,

https://www.oca.org/saints/troparia/2010/02/18/100553-saint-leo-the-great-pope-of-rome.

[132] "The Synodikon of Orthodoxy," *Mystagogy Resource Center: An Orthodox Christian Ministry of John Sanidopoulos*, Feb. 21, 2010, https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/02/synodicon-of-orthodoxy.html (emphasis added).

> Athanasius, Hilary, Basil, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Theophilus, John (Chrysostom) of Constantinople, Cyril, Augustine, Proclus, *Leo and their writings on the true faith.*[133]

In the sentence of the same council:

> Nevertheless in order that they who thus calumniate the holy council of Chalcedon may have no further opportunity of doing so, we ordered to be recited the decisions of the holy Synods, to wit, of first Ephesus, and of Chalcedon, with regard to the Epistles of Cyril of blessed memory *and of Leo*, of pious memory, *sometime Pope of Old Rome.*[134]

It is beyond any reasonable doubt that the Orthodox Church upholds Leo the Great as not just a man of unique veneration but also a prominent saint who contributed to the victory of the Orthodox faith at major turning points of Church history. He is up there with St. Athanasius, St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Cappadocians, St. Augustine, and many others. However, since, as we saw above, St. Leo is understood by even non-Catholic scholars to have taught the basic idea of the Catholic papacy, it causes one to question how such a person as he could be, at once, cherished as such a great saint of orthodoxy while also seen as one promoting the heresy, or its seeds, which the Orthodox today have compared to Arianism.[135]

## THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451)

Much more is learned about the papal claims of St. Leo as we enter into discussing the controversy surrounding an accused Abbot of Constantinople, Eutyches, together with the Councils of Ephesus (449) and Chalcedon (451). It begins with Eutyches writing a letter to the pope informing him of the revival of Nestorianism in the East. Just by

[133] Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553), "Session 1," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3812.htm (emphasis added).

[134] Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553), "Session 1," *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[135] Orthodox Patriarchs, "Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848," *Fordham University*, §4, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1848orthodoxencyclical.asp.

doing this, he recognized the role of the Apostolic See in condemning Nestorius and ratifying the Council of Ephesus (431), as well as Formula of Union (433), which put St. Cyril and John of Antioch back into peace. At some point in 448, Eutyches stood condemned by a council held in Constantinople under its bishop, St. Flavian (446–449). Seeking exoneration, he appealed to the synods of Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Thessalonica, but "he counted most on Rome."[136] Complaining of the "injustice" at the synod under St. Flavian, he wrote the following to the pope:

> I asked them to let your holiness know these things, *that you might judge what seemed right to you*, undertaking by all means to follow your ruling. But without listening to any thing which I said, they broke up the Synod and published the sentence of my degradation. . . . *I take refuge*, therefore, with you the defender of religion and abhorrer of such factions. . . . I beseech you not to be prejudiced against me . . . *but to pronounce the sentence which shall seem to you right upon the Faith.*[137]

Not much should be deduced from this, especially since Eutyches never recanted of his errors even after Rome had given full judgment on the matter. It does show an instinct to abide by the Irenaean principle,[138] but he never ended up "agreeing" with Rome anyway, as far as the record is concerned. Perhaps he was just looking to use Rome for his own end. In any case, we have another character in this story who provides corroboration on the matter. Eutyches also wrote to St. Peter Chrysologus (Peter the "Golden-Worded"), bishop of Ravenna, inquiring what he should do. St. Peter's response is quite interesting:

> We exhort you . . . that you *obediently listen* to what has been written by the blessed Pope of the city of Rome, since blessed Peter, *who lives and presides in his own see, offers the truth of the faith to those who seek.* For we, in our zeal for

[136] Kidd, *The Roman Primacy*, 131.

[137] Leo, Letter 21, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604021.htm.

[138] All churches must agree with "this Church" on account of its "pre-eminent authority."

> peace and faith, *cannot decide questions of faith apart from the consent of the bishop of Rome.*[139]

Happily venerated by the Orthodox on June 30, the "Chrysologus" of Ravenna is also found as an adherent to the Innocentian principle of requiring Rome's ratification on all conciliar judgments concerning the faith and on account of its Petrine authority. Some might think he spoke merely as a Westerner for Westerners, however, why would St. Peter seek to impose upon Eutyches, an Abbot in Constantinople, rules and strictures which have no bearing in the territories of the East? Truly, he was speaking on behalf of all bishops of East and West. Keep in mind, by this time St. Peter Chrysologus had no idea that a council would be convened. He simply understood that letters from the See of Peter would decide the matter. And, as one might expect, it was the Apostle Peter's authority, as continued in the person of his successors, that grounded the entire protocol from the pen of the Chrysologus of Ravenna. This harkens back to that "ongoing sharing" between St. Peter and his successors with Christ, the heavenly Head.

Coming back to Rome and its reaction to Eutyches, St. Leo took his divinely appointed position as watchmen and wrote to the East to inquire. In the meantime, St. Flavian had sent an epistle to the pope which included the proceedings of the synod which had condemned Eutyches. Not being aware of this transmission *en route* to Rome, St. Leo explained in his own letter to St. Flavian how Eutyches had complained of an injustice, namely, being wrongfully accused of heresy and Rome not heeding his lodged appeal to the Apostolic See. St. Flavian, receiving this, in turn wrote a second epistle with more explanation, describing how it was a false claim that Eutychus "*appealed to your holiness: this he certainly never did.*"[140] In sum, he urged the pope to issue a letter to resolve the question once and for all since, saying to St. Leo, "The matter only requires your weight and support, which through your wisdom will at once bring about general peace and quietness . . . *and the rumoured synod will also be prevented.*"[141] Apparently, St. Flavian believed a doctrinal decree from Rome would be sufficient to render an ecumenical council,

[139] Letter 25, To Eutyches, *PL* 54.743, as quoted in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 282–83.

[140] Leo, Letter 26, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604026.htm.

[141] Leo, Letter 26, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

which had become a "rumor" in the works behind the scenes by Eutyches and Emperor Theodosius II, *unnecessary*. In return to this, St. Leo issued his Tome in a form of a letter to the bishop of Constantinople to squelch the Eutychian scandal. This only proved to be the start of things.

While this happened, Eutyches managed to be successful in his petition to the imperial court for an ecumenical council to be held in the city of Ephesus. The emperor so convened.[142] At first, both Sts. Leo and Flavian protested against the need for a council. The pope wrote to the emperor stating that "it would have been more reasonable to abstain from proclaiming a synod,"[143] but yielded himself in honorable acquiescence to the royal law nonetheless. The pope sent two legates, Renatus and St. Hilary, to represent him at the Council in Ephesus (449). In his epistle to the council, St. Leo explained how the emperor, in his zeal against doctrinal error, had abided by the divine rule. This is how a fifth century pope understood the basic outlook of what was to take place at an ecumenical council:

> [The Emperor] has paid such deference to the Divine institutions as to apply to the authority of the Apostolic See for

[142] Of course, as already noted, the convocation of an ecumenical council was the prerogative of the emperor by the consent of the Church, however much its decrees were all accountable to the Apostolic See and the bishops. A gathering of this sort only came by way of the Constantinian revolution (313), which allowed the financing and logistics to get so many bishops in one place for a sufficient amount of time. This structure of an ecumenical council, it must be remembered, is somewhat post-Christian, or post-apostolic. One should keep that in mind as the details of history concerning these councils don't always reflect the "Church's consciousness." That is not to degrade their importance nor their divine role in the dissemination of doctrine. But it is to say that the element giving the council its divinity is the a priori prerogative of the divine episcopate under one papal head, an episcopate which must, as St. Peter Chrysologus said, submit in communion and obedience to St. Peter's one seat. Outside of this framework, there is no business between the Church of Christ and the massive gathering called an ecumenical council. That is not to say that at each and every ecumenical council this framework was in play, but all councils accepted by the Catholic Church as ecumenical, whether in the process, or *post ex facto*, are qualified by that framework. This is why only seven out of all the councils which were referred to as "ecumenical" are recognized by the Church. As early as St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the bishops on the right side of doctrine were not always enthusiastic about these convocations. The pope could prove to have the same lack of enthusiasm.

[143] Leo, Letter 37, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604037.htm.

> a proper settlement: as if he wished it to be declared *by the most blessed Peter himself.*[144]

He then goes on to explain how Christ the Lord made St. Peter the rock upon which the building of the holy Church is built:

> But he who both rejects the blessed Peter's confession, and gainsays Christ's gospel, *is far removed from union with this building.*[145]

There is no mistaking this. St. Leo saw the emperor's consultation with the Apostolic See as equal to consulting with the faith of St. Peter, and also that whoever did not abide by St. Peter's confession (i.e., Leo's Tome) was removed from the Church entirely. In context, the pope understood his Tome to be, without question, the standard of orthodoxy, guaranteed to be correct by St. Peter's protection under Christ. If we add together with this the clarity offered in his sermons about the "abiding partnership" or "ongoing sharing" between Christ, St. Peter, and of his successors in the Roman See, the message is unmistakable. According to Greek Orthodox historian George E. Demacopoulos, this letter of the pope to the council was intended to reduce the question of Eutyches's standing in the Church, not as a matter, at least in the first instance, of a Christological correction, but rather as a "question of submission to or rejection of Saint Peter . . . *an acceptance or rejection of Petrine* (i.e., his) *authority.*"[146]

St. Leo proceeded to explain why a council was still being held while St. Peter's infallible confession had already been delivered in his Tome. Many students of history often ask the age-old question, "If infallible, why a council?" It should be asked how St. Leo could, at once, believe his Tome was the definitive criteria of Christological orthodoxy while at the same time acquiescing to a council to examine the Christological subject. It is due, he says, to the (1) need for healing and (2) a "*fuller judgment.*" In his own words:

---

[144] Leo, Letter 33, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604033.htm.

[145] Leo, Letter 33, *New Advent.*

[146] George Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 62.

> *But because the healing* even of such men *must not be neglected*, and the most Christian *Emperor* has piously and *devoutly desired* a council of bishops to be held, *that all error may be destroyed by a fuller judgment*, I have sent our brothers Julius the bishop, Renatus the presbyter, and my son Hilary the deacon, and with them Dulcitius the notary, whose faith we have proved, to be present in my stead at your holy assembly, brethren, and *settle in common with you* what is in accordance with the Lord's will.[147]

From the looks of it, it might appear as if the pope admitted that a council's judgment, a "common" settlement, carried a greater authority than his own. And, if it were not for other statements requiring a synthesis of Leonine thought, one is well within reason to reach such a conclusion. However, the late Fr. Reuben Parsons (1841–1906) explains how this is to be read in light of other clear statements by St. Leo which indicate, as Demacopoulos observed, that papal judgment leaves no room for dissent:

> In his Synodal Epistle to the fathers at Ephesus, St. Leo says that the emperor wished for a Council, "in order that, by a fuller judgment, every error might be swept away." But we have already seen that the Pope told Flavian that the affair "needed no treatment whatever by a synod;" that he told Theodosius that "for reasonable causes he should refrain from calling a Synod;" we have heard St. Peter Chrysologus advising Eutyches to obediently attend to what the Roman Pontiff would write, because "the Blessed Peter shows to seekers the true faith." If, in the face of all this, at the request of the emperor, a Council was called, the Pontiff so permitted, not because he thought an ecumenical synod superior to himself, but to repress the contumacy of the heretics, by leaving them no possible excuse for their obstinacy. . . . Again, in his epistle to the fathers of Nicaea (afterwards at Chalcedon) *the Pontiff forbade any disputation upon faith, because he had already, in his epistle to Flavian, fully explained what was to be believed.* Writing this, could he have dreamed of a critical examination of his

[147] Leo, Letter 33, *New Advent.*

> letter? St. Leo assented to the holding of a General Council . . . *but in it he was to be dominant; what he desired, was to be done; disputes were to be avoided, and his Dogmatic Epistle to Flavian was to be the rule of faith in the matter of Eutychianism.*[148]

In other words, St. Leo did not hand off the dogmatic question of Eutychianism to a higher court to examine afresh and come to its own decision, since he was well under the impression that the "primacy of his own see . . . gave him the right to make definitive pronouncements in doctrinal disputes."[149] His words simply cannot be reconciled with that sort of perspective, and the patristic scholars of old up to the present are virtually unanimous on this point. Fr. Luke Rivington (1838–1899) summarizes the concept in a somewhat accurate manner:

> The council was as it were the fuller and more emphatic utterance of the Papal judgment. *Its action was to consist in adhering to the judgment of the Apostolic See*—in, as it were, prolonging its utterance, and applying it materially and visibly to the person at hand. It was not a higher judgment, not the confirmation of a superior authority, but the sentence of the Pope swelling out and completed by its synodical proclamation.[150]

A "fuller judgment" can easily be understood as a wider examination with the aid of a multitude of counselors, as the Proverbs say, though restricted by the force of a prior certainty. This is further confirmed in a different letter of St. Leo to a certain Julian of Cos. In this letter, he tells Julian that the emperor had convened a council of bishops for a "more *careful judgment* to be passed about the position of one who hitherto has seemed to be in high esteem."[151] In other words, the judgment here

---

[148] Reuben Parsons, *Studies in Church History*, vol. 1, second ed. (New York: Fr. Pustet & Co., 1906), 340–41.

[149] Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils, and Christ* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 159. In the same passage, Bray comments that the East did not accept this idea.

[150] Fr. Luke Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), 377.

[151] Leo, Letter 34, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604034.htm (emphasis added).

was not so much on the matter of doctrine, but rather a procedure was taken for greater care about the specific situation of Eutyches. The idea of putting the dogmatic content in a fresh examination of a council could not be farther from the mind of St. Leo. The council had no rights to ignore his Tome, and this is made clear from the same letter. Not only did St. Leo already say that removal from St. Peter's confession is alienation from the rock upon which the Church is built, he went on:

> I have addressed a letter suited to the needs of the case to our brother Flavian, *from which* you also, beloved, and *the whole Church may know about the ancient and unique Faith*, which this unlearned opponent has assailed, *what we hold as handed down from God and what we preach without alteration*. Yet, because we must not forget the *duty of mercy*, we have considered it consonant with our *moderation* as priests, that, if the condemned presbyter corrects himself unreservedly, the sentence by which he is bound should be remitted.[152]

More corroboration that St. Leo understood this convocation of an ecumenical council as his acquiescing comes in a preliminary letter he sent to the emperor. In this he tells Theodosius that Eutyches has been sufficiently refuted, and continues:

> Yet since your piety . . . has determined on a synodal judgment at Ephesus, that the Truth on which he is blind may be brought home to the ignorant old man.[153]

For St. Leo, the education of the ignorant was more a reason for this synod than anything else. The same letter demonstrates his unquestionable certainty about his Tome. He told Theodosius he was sending legates to represent him, and they would offer a chance of repentance:

> And they shall bring with them such a spirit of justice and kindness that while the whole misguided error is

[152] Leo, Letter 34, *New Advent*.

[153] Leo, Letter 29, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604029.htm (emphasis added).

> condemned (*for there can be no doubt as to what is the integrity of the Christian faith*), yet if he who has gone astray repents and entreats for pardon, he may receive the succor of priestly indulgence. . . . But what the Catholic Church universally believes and teaches on the mystery of the Lord's incarnation is contained more fully *in the letter which I have sent to my brother and fellow-bishop Flavian.*[154]

For St. Leo, the Christology of the Roman See was indispensable and only lacked a formal conciliar promulgation on a very specific point. In other words, from his point of view, the council was not to function to call into question his Tome but rather to consult among bishops about how to better apply the truth to the situation of one man, leaving the sentence of excommunication as a last resort. Unfortunately, to the pope's disappointment, the Council of Ephesus (449) ended up going contrary to his direction. Not only was Eutyches acquitted, but the Tome was not even read aloud as the defining object of dogmatic concentration. On top of this, St. Flavian, and a number of other orthodox bishops were excommunicated and deposed. The mover and shaker of the council had been a certain Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria. He even eventually proceeded to excommunicate Pope St. Leo!

During the council, both St. Flavian and St. Hilary, the papal legate, made public protest against the proceedings. Despite this, signatures were added to the proceedings, and the council was "definitively" confirmed by Emperor Theodosius II. In agreement was the patriarch of Alexandria Dioscorus, Juvenal of Jerusalem, Maximus of Antioch (who replaced Domnus, its former occupant), Stephen of Ephesus, and many others.[155] This was not an insignificant group from the episcopal hierarchy. As far as the Eastern chiefs were concerned, these were the primary voices.

In fact, we find out later in St. Flavian's appeal to Rome from the council that a significant force of bishops was in support of the travesty. And yet, it is remarkable that St. Flavian wrote such an appeal against so large a council. In it, he explained the violence done to ecclesiastical order and how he responded. He writes:

[154] Leo, Letter 29, *New Advent.*

[155] Rivington, *Roman Primacy*, 163.

> When I began to appeal to the *throne of the Apostolic see of Peter*, the prince of the Apostles, and to the whole sacred synod which is obedient to your holiness,[156] at once a crowd of soldiers surrounded me and barred the way when I wished to take refuge at the altar. . . . Therefore I beseech Your Holiness not to permit these things to be treated with indifference . . . but to *rise up* first on behalf of the cause of our orthodox faith, now destroyed by unlawful acts. . . . [F]urther *issue an authoritative instruction* . . . so that a like faith may everywhere be preached, by the assembly of a united synod of the fathers, both eastern and western. *Thus the laws of the fathers may prevail and all that has been done amiss be rendered null and void: bring healing to this ghastly wound.*[157]

This should be a cause for pause. From all appearances, this council in Ephesus was properly convened as an "ecumenical" council. It achieved the agreement and consent of a significant number of bishops, not least the heavyweights of the East. This council certainly had more gravitas than Constantinople I (381) in terms of formality and procedure. Most importantly, it had the approbation of the Roman emperor. What more could be asked in order to prove that this was a settled matter? If, as opponents of the papacy say, the bishop of Rome was simply a primate of honor and moral influence, possessing no jurisdiction over the universal Church, what hope could there be in St. Flavian's appeal to the pope?[158] If the council was equipped to command the pope, then that was what should have happened. But St. Flavian was doing no less than asking the pope to enact the process that would see to it that the Council of Ephesus (449) was declared *null and void*, something which St. Leo proceeded to do.[159] This was no less than a clear and open acknowledgement by St. Flavian of the "authority of Rome to overturn an ecclesiastical conviction."[160]

---

[156] This is referring the Italian bishops who comprise the synod under Rome as the patriarch.

[157] Trevor Jalland, *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great* (London: SPCK, 1941), 243, as quoted in *The Building of Christendom*, by Carroll, 114.

[158] Rivington, *Roman Primacy*, 167–80.

[159] The papal legates said aloud and inserted into the *Acts* of the tenth session of Chalcedon that Pope St. Leo annulled the decrees of Ephesus (449); see *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, trans. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (Liverpool University Press, 2005), 303. Anatolius of Constantinople seemed to agree; see *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 304.

[160] Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden,

This was a brief foreshadowing of days to come when the papacy would emerge once and for all above the imperial principle in relation to councils and would be the sole subject for convening councils. That day, however, was not yet. In any case, the enormity of this request should not be ignored. It was not as if the Sardican canons, as strictly read, provided a means for a condemned bishop to appeal from the court of an ecumenical council to the court of Rome. We saw this already occur with the two metropolitans who appealed to Rome over the Formula of Reunion (433), which sought to overturn Ephesus (431). Here, once again, we have a bishop of Constantinople asking not only for the pope to "rise up" and intervene in the Eastern affairs but to issue an "authoritative decree" through which an ecumenical council's decrees may be reversed. What exactly St. Flavian had in mind in terms of this process of nullification is not stated, but the hint to the Innocentian principle is unmistakable: *decrees of councils should not be considered finished until brought to the knowledge of St. Peter's See.*

This might have been a sort of rare exception if it were not for the additional appeals from Eusebius of Dorylaeum and Theodoret of Cyrus, both of whom were deposed by the Ephesine bishops under Dioscorus. In the letter of Eusebius to St. Leo, he has the following request:

> The Apostolic throne has been wont *from the beginning* to defend those who are suffering injustice. . . . Wherefore I, being entangled in unavoidable [embarrassments], *fly to the only refuge, after the help of God,* in my affliction and extremity, desiring to *find a release* from the ills that have befallen me . . . to your See I entreat your blessedness . . . *pronounce the reversal* (*evacuatio*), and *nullity of any unjust condemnation by the most religious Dioscorus and of their decree* . . . and *give me back* the dignity of my episcopate, *and communion with yourself.*[161]

---

Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 275.

[161] *Libellus Appellationis Eusebii*, translated by Rivington in *Roman Primacy*, 177–78. This source from Eusebius of Dorylaeum was discovered more recently in history. A few sources I've consulted give as citation *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, II, 2.1.79.20–25, ed. E. Schwartz, citation found *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 206n2. Brian E. Daley, S.J., "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches," in *Church Unity & The Papal Office*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 47n51. In one other place, Trevor Jalland cites *Neues Archiv*, vol. XI, 364, in *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great*, ed. Mommsen, 243n23. This same citation is given by Adolf Von Harnack

Once again, another Eastern bishop who was prepared to see an ecumenical council being nullified by the bishop of Rome? If the bishop of Rome were simply a primate of honor, or even less, an "equal among equals," as the synod of patriarch Anthimus (1895) put it, what hope could Eusebius have in some lone bishop of the West, regardless of how much moral prestige he had? How would such a primate be able to confront the legal strength of the Ephesine Council? That council had officially approved Eutyches's confession of two natures in Christ "before the incarnation," and votes in favor of this were 111 out of 130.[162]

As Eusebius stated, from "the beginning" of Christ's Church, the Apostolic See had been coming to the aid of those suffering injustice. It was not without precedent. We see acts of universal jurisdiction going back to Sts. Stephen (252), Dionysius (261), Julius (340–343), Damasus (382), Siricius (384), Innocent (416), Zosimus (417), Boniface (422), and Celestine (431). These popes, as we saw, most of whom are venerated as saints in the Orthodox Church today, understood they held the capacity to annul the decrees of Eastern synods, reverse their sentences, and restore clergy to their jobs by the communication of authoritative letters. Whatever might be said concerning this dispute over the extent of jurisdiction in the papal office, "the historical factors promoting papal primacy endured over time while the factors obstructing it, *always present as well*, only served as temporary hurdles, and sometimes contributed in the long run to strengthen the cause of primacy."[163]

Yet some Orthodox interpreters might suggest that the only reason this type of terminology is used of St. Flavian and Eusebius is that Rome was the only source of hope at the time, and thus they were apt to use flattering words. That is questionable, but even if it were to be conceded, what hope did these men have in artificially propping up a fake authority to compete with the sentence of an ecumenical council? If it was pure flattery, then they all would have known they were appealing to a smaller authority to overcome a larger authority, and that makes the least sense of their intentions. If Rome couldn't intervene authoritatively, then these men might as well have kept their quills free from ink altogether and invested in a plan that would have at least a modicum of chance to actually work. This way of reading Eusebius and St. Flavian is, therefore,

in *History of Dogma*, vol. 5, trans. and ed. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1899), 168n1.

[162] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 177.

[163] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 176–77 (emphasis added).

unlikely. The chances for this interpretation get weaker when we consider a third example that emerges from this catastrophe in Theodoret, archbishop of Cyrus. His testimony only adds to the foregoing gloss on the Eastern perception of the Roman primacy as something capable of confronting a council and silencing its authority. He, too, being deposed by the council, appealed to the pope:

> If Paul, the herald of the Truth, the trumpet of the Holy Ghost, had *recourse to the great Peter* in order to *obtain a decision* from him for those at Antioch who were disputing about living by the Law, how much more do we *small and humble folk run to the Apostolic See* to get healing from you for the sores of the Church.[164]

The reasoning here is clear. The Apostle Paul, otherwise known as the equal to the fisherman in the vocation of Apostle, had recourse to his superior according to hierarchical communion. Since St. Paul was so great an Apostle, and even he had resource to St. Peter's primacy, how much more should those who are significantly inferior to St. Paul "run to the Apostolic See." No reader should mistake the Petrine foundation to Rome's primacy being stated so emphatically by a metropolitan bishop of nearly eight hundred churches in Cyrus of the Syrian East. He goes on to say to say that it is fitting that Rome should have "in all things the preeminence, seeing that your See possesses many peculiar privileges." These are:

> For other cities get a name for *size or beauty* or *population*, and some that are devoid of these advantages are compensated by certain spiritual gifts: but your city has the fullest abundance of good things from the Giver of all good. For she is of all cities the greatest and most famous, the mistress of the world and teeming with population. And besides this she has created an empire which is still predominant and has imposed her own name upon her subjects. *But her chief decoration is her Faith*, to which the Divine Apostle is a sure witness when he exclaims "your faith is proclaimed in all the world"; and if immediately after receiving the seeds

[164] Leo, Letter 52, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604052.htm.

> of the saving Gospel she bore such a weight of wondrous fruit, what words are sufficient to express *the piety which is now found in her*? She has, too, the tombs of our common fathers and teachers of the Truth, Peter and Paul, to illumine the souls of the faithful. And this blessed and divine pair arose indeed in the East, and shed its rays in all directions, but voluntarily underwent sunset of life in the West, *from whence now it illumines the whole world.*[165]

These privileges can all be narrowed down to the purity of faith in the Roman church.[166] In a different letter, he gives a further reason:

> For that holy see has precedence of all churches in the world, *for many reasons*; and above all for this, that it is *free from all taint of heresy*, and that *no bishop of false opinions has ever sat upon its throne*, but it has kept the grace of the Apostles undefiled.[167]

This is quite the claim, seeing as how since St. Stephen (third century), the popes of Rome were teaching the basic kernels which were the essence of the papal doctrine later developed. In any case, Theodoret, like St. Flavian and Eusebius, did not seek the utility of an honorific primate. Rather, he sought a judgment to beat the decrees of Ephesus (449):

> I however await the *verdict* of your Apostolic See, and beg and pray your Holiness to succor me when I *appeal* to your upright and just *tribunal*, and bid me come to you and show that my teaching follows in the track of the Apostles. . . . And I beg you not to spurn my petition, nor to overlook the insults heaped on my poor white hairs.[168]

---

[165] Leo, Letter 52, *New Advent*.

[166] Some have taken up the interpretation that Theodoret here could have spoken of the Petrine supremacy. There seems, this interpretation claims, to be no reason to dwell in the grandeur of the Roman city nor in the dual contribution of both Peter and Paul if her primacy was due to the Petrine supremacy. However, these elements certainly did adorn the See of Rome with further privileges, and he had already signified the Petrine element in the comparison of Paul's appeal to Peter and his own appeal to the Apostolic See.

[167] Epistle 116, To Renatus the Presbyter, *PG* 83.1324, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 294–95 (emphasis added).

[168] Leo, Letter 52, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

He sought an authoritative reversal of his condemnation by an ecumenical council. Nothing short of that, at least. Meanwhile, this all fell into the lap of Pope St. Leo. These Eastern bishops sought an authoritative decision from the pope to undo the enactments of "*a Council which had all the outward appearances of a General Council, and which had the Emperor on its side.*"[169] What was Pope St. Leo to do? At first, he wrote to Theodosius II explaining how he had been notified of the problems with Ephesus (449) and urged him, in accordance with St. Flavian's appeal, to convene a new ecumenical council close to himself in Italy for a proper settlement to be achieved. He also wrote to the emperor beseeching him to "order everything to be in the position in which they were before the decision until a larger number of priests be assembled from the whole world."[170] In addition, St. Leo appealed to the appellate canons of Sardica as rendering it necessary that the decrees of the Council of Ephesus (449) should be suspended in light of further review.[171]

Seeking to gain greater support from the Sovereigns,[172] St. Leo also wrote to Pulcheria Augusta, who was the Eastern regent for Theodosius II whilst he was young and growing, Galla Placidia (daughter of Theodosius I), the Western regent on behalf of the up-and-coming Valentinian III, and finally to Valentinian III himself. One special piece of information comes from Galla Placidia who had, upon receiving notification of the Ephesine affairs from St. Leo, written to Emperor Theodosius II urging him toward the following:

> For this cause we pray your clemency to oppose such disturbances with the Truth, and to order the Faith of the catholic religion to be preserved without spot, in order that according to the *standard and decision* of the Apostolic See which we likewise revere as pre-eminent, *Flavianus may remain altogether uninjured in his priestly office, and the matter be*

[169] Batiffol, *Catholicism and Papacy*, 81–82 (emphasis added).

[170] Leo, Letter 44, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604044.htm.

[171] Leo, Letter 44, *New Advent*.

[172] This should not be interpreted as if Leo were succumbing to an imperial takeover of the Church of Christ. Rather, it was the happy state of affairs for which wisdom and prudence demanded cooperation. The Byzantines call it a *symphonia* between Church and state. Inevitably, when the state sought to overthrow papal authority, the former would, if fear be no obstacle, assert itself dogmatically.

> *referred to the Synod of the Apostolic See, wherein assuredly he first adorned the primacy, who was deemed worthy to receive the keys of heaven.*[173]

How else could the daughter of Theodosius I, whose decree against heretics in 379 mandated the conformity of his empire to the Apostolic Tradition as delivered by St. Peter, respond to the then plea of St. Leo?[174] More interesting is the Western emperor, Valentinian III, who wrote to Theodosius II saying:

> The most blessed bishop of the city of the Romans, to whom *antiquity yielded the episcopal rule over all* ought to have opportunity and facility for *judging* concerning the faith and concerning bishops. For this reason, in accordance with the custom of the Councils the bishop of Constantinople [Flavian] formally appealed to him.[175]

Here, even the sovereign authorities recognized the Innocentian rule, reported to the East through the Greek historians Socrates and Sozomen, that no decrees of councils have full authority until reviewed by the successor of St. Peter, and that any canons enacted against the bishop of Rome are null and void. Valentinian III, like the others, petitioned Theodosius II to agree to sending Eastern bishops to Italy for an ecumenical council to be held *under the authority of St. Peter*, and referred to the customs of councils as if, prior to 449, this had been known even by everyone for all antiquity. However, none of these petitions was successful. Even so, Pope St. Leo never accepted the decrees of Ephesus (449).[176]

In opposition, Theodosius II maintained the validity of their decrees, which only shows the dangerous divergence that state and Church could produce to the great harm of many souls. It was not until he died and was succeeded by General Marcian that ecclesiastical policies in the East

[173] Leo, Letter 56, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604056.htm.

[174] *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750: The Conversion of Western Europe*, ed. J. N. Hillgarth (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 46–47.

[175] Leo's Epistolary, Letter 55, in *Roman Primacy*, trans. Rivington, 192.

[176] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 87. On page 100, Price quotes Leo in a particular letter to Marcian: "The subsequent synod in the aforesaid city [Ephesus] we cannot call a council, since it is clear that it was set in motion for the overthrow of the faith."

changed. During that interval of time, there was a real breach of communion between Rome and the East. Emperor St. Marcian, whose feast for the Orthodox is celebrated on the February 17, being supportive of Pope St. Leo as well as being against the decrees of the "Robber Council" in Ephesus, immediately had Eutyches exiled and sought to convene an ecumenical council. The goal was to officially overturn the decisions of Ephesus 449, which St. Leo understood as already annulled by his own authority,[177] and to make a *new definition of faith* for the sake of the empire's peace and tranquility. Since, however, the emperor thought it would not be feasible to send countless Eastern bishops to the West, St. Marcian did what was most expedient and summoned a council, initially in Nicaea, but then finally in Chalcedon (451).

Writing to the pope, the new orthodox emperor stated that it would be most appropriate to the bishop of Rome, who has "primacy in the episcopate of the divine faith," to "be first addressed by our sacred letters."[178] These letters were steps toward holding a council, said St. Marcian to St. Leo, to be held "*on your authority*."[179] This is precisely what was included in the appeal of St. Flavian. Enough time had elapsed between Ephesus (449) and St. Marcian's reign for the pope to realize that an ecumenical council, either in Italy or the East, was no longer necessary. For him it was sufficient to send legates to the East in order to collect signatures to his Tome through the agency of St. Anatolius, the successor to Flavian in the church of Constantinople.[180] This would either restore communion to those unlawfully defrocked or to the penitent clergy who came to their senses from their prior actions defending Dioscorus and Eutyches. Nevertheless, the pope eventually submitted to the emperor's plans and prepared his legates to go East.

The pope's perspective on the matter was merely an echo of the famous words attributed to Augustine, "*Roma locuta est, causa finita est*"

---

[177] Of course, Leo had already called this council a Robber Council, or "den of thieves"; see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 106. In the tenth session of the council, the papal legates made a bold claim that Leo had already annulled the Council of Ephesus (449); see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 303. The bishop of Constantinople follows them in saying that the decrees of that council were "instantly overturned" (*The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 304).

[178] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 92.

[179] *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 93 (emphasis added).

[180] Leo, Letter 85, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604085.htm.

("Rome has spoken, the matter is finished"). According to Fr. Richard Price, professor of Church history at Heythrop College and whose unmatched contribution to this study in his translating the whole *Acts* of the Council of Chalcedon surely qualifies him, Pope St. Leo's orientation toward the council was not one of handing off the matter to be settled by a superior authority, as if the dogmatic status of his Tome were a matter for further inquiry:

> [Leo] regarded the doctrinal controversy as having been settled by his Tome; if there had to be a council, he held that, apart from settling the status of persons, *it should simply acknowledge and confirm the teaching of the Tome*, as the definitive ruling on the points at issue; the last thing he wanted was a reopening of the debate, as if the teaching of the heir and successor of St. Peter were *simply one among a plethora of competing voices.*[181]

World renowned patristics scholar Henry Chadwick concurs:

> In Leo's judgment, however, the function of the Greek council was to manifest its own orthodoxy by *submissively indicating its assent to the ruling already given by himself*, the legitimate juridical successor of Peter the prince of the Apostles. It was axiomatic for Leo that the Roman See has received and guards the true Apostolic tradition, is predestined by God for this service to the entire Church, *is therefore protected from leading the Church astray*, and in jurisdiction possesses a universal responsibility inherent in being Peter's successor.[182]

---

[181] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 91. Price says in volume 3, 108: "It will be remembered that Pope Leo had originally opposed the convocation of a council, since *he considered that the doctrinal issue had already been resolved by his Tome* and that the disciplinary matters arising from Ephesus II could be dealt with by his own representatives, acting in concert with Anatolius of Constantinople" (emphasis mine). Elsewhere, the same author repeats the same idea: "Before the council of Chalcedon, Pope Leo had claimed that an ecumenical council to discuss the faith was uncalled for since his own Tome had settled the question at issue" (*The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy* [Liverpool University Press, 2009], 56).

[182] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 48–49 (emphasis added).

The late Orthodox archbishop and professor of canon law at St. Vladimir's Orthodox seminary, Peter L'Huillier, also concurs:

> In the thought of St. Leo, the goal of the assembly was to regulate the canonical situation of the bishops who had compromised themselves at Ephesus 449, and to reestablish the victims of Dioscorus and his followers in their rights. He considered that the question of faith had already been settled by his Tome; *the only thing for the future assembly to do, according to the Pope, was to accept this document.*[183]

St. Leo's instructions to Chalcedon "forbade the bishops in council to subject it to the scrutiny of discussion" since the matter had already been resolved, and the council was simply to "receive the Tome as an utterance of blessed Peter himself."[184] Interpreting St. Leo to be a wise diplomat, Chadwick understands that St. Leo may have "occasionally appealed to the decisions of church councils," but even so, he gave them far less weight in themselves than his own Petrine authority.[185] It seems reasonable to infer that both Fr. Price and Chadwick recognize St. Leo to have understood his Tome to even be *infallible.* Fr. Price states that St. Leo did not believe his Tome could be competed with even by the council, and that the latter was powerless to reopen the question on the contents of the Tome. That is tantamount to saying that the Tome was definitive and, therefore, irreformable. Chadwick reads St. Leo as having based his viewpoint from the predestinating promise of Christ to protect the ministry of St. Peter's successor.

The *Acts* of the Council of Chalcedon itself, however, also make it difficult to say that the East wholly rejected this prestige of papal authority. In the opening of the first session, papal legates accuse Dioscorus of a crime which is an indictment for not following the protocols of the Julian[186] and Innocentian principle. Dioscorus was blamed for daring "to hold a synod without the authority of the Apostolic See, a thing which had never taken place nor can take place."[187] It was an axiom for these

[183] Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, 1996), 186.

[184] Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 244.

[185] Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 244.

[186] Pope St. Julius's instruction to the Eusebian bishops on Rome (and all the churches) should be consulted.

[187] Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), "Session 1," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian

legates that a council could not be considered finally authoritative until it had been reviewed and approved by the bishop of Rome. At the close of this session, the major "ring leaders" of Ephesus (449)[188] were deposed.

One of the most significant points of the council was its third session, where the papal legates executed the disciplinary sentence of the pope on Dioscorus:

> Therefore the holy and most blessed pope, the head of the universal church, through us his representatives and with the assent of the holy council, *endowed as he is with the dignity of Peter the Apostle,* who is called the foundation of the church, the rock of faith, and the doorkeeper of the heavenly kingdom, *has stripped him of episcopal dignity and excluded him from all priestly functions.*[189]

There is nothing in the *Acts* of this council that merits more pause. If only contemporary scholarship were unanimous on the implications of this sentence, there would be a far greater recognition of the acceptance of a divinely instituted papal office in the early era of Christendom. One scholar who caught the significance is the late Basil Christopher Butler (1902–1986), seventh abbot of Downside Abbey and who was an official speaker at the Second Vatican Council after he converted to Catholicism from the Church of England. His observation on this papal sentence is astoundingly illuminating:

> The "papal claims" in this statement do not interest us here except in so far as it is clearly implied that what Leo was to the Catholic communion of his own day, *that Peter was,* and by Christ's appointment, *to the Church of Christ;* and that the concrete visible society (only a fragment of contemporary "Christendom") that is here exercising jurisdiction over the Bishop of Alexandria is identical with the Church which Christ established.[190]

---

Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3811.htm.

[188] Dioscorus of Alexandria, Juvenal of Jerusalem, Thalassius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Ancyra, Eustathius of Berytus, and Basil of Isaurian Seleucia; see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 311n114.

[189] *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 69.

[190] B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church*, 81 (emphasis added).

What Fr. Butler here picks up on is that the Council of Chalcedon, by framing this papal sentence in the way it did in the official *Acts*, recognized that the relationship that St. Leo the Great had to the ecumenical council and the universal Church itself was the very same relationship that St. Peter had in relation to the very same (Church) by Christ's divine appointment. When and if the Church is to judge definitively, it must do so under the primacy of its head, St. Peter (or his successor), and it is so framed by the ordination of Christ himself in the original *Tu es Petrus* investiture to St. Peter as rock and key-bearer. Whether the Greeks understood it or not, by putting this decree into the text of the council, they were readily consenting to the basic logic of the papacy. There is still more.

If the reader will read through the second, fourth, and fifth sessions, which took up the bulk of the doctrinal discussions at the council, it will be clearly seen that St. Leo's Tome, acclaimed to have been purposefully ignored at the Council of Ephesus (449), was now at Chalcedon "enthusiastically acclaimed by the synod."[191] The idea passed around that the Council of Chalcedon had to examine the Tome of St. Leo before it received binding authority is pure mythology. Right in the opening of the second session, the imperial commissioners had posed the question of how the true faith should be confirmed. In response, Cecropius, bishop of Sebastopolis, acted as spokesperson of the orthodox majority:

> A decree was issued on the subject by the most holy archbishop of Rome; *we assent to it and we have all signed his letter.*[192]

That he was not alone in this is shown by what follows thereafter:

> The most devout bishops exclaimed: "This is what *we all* say."[193]

After the Tome was read aloud in the second session, the bishops cried out:

---

[191] B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church*, 46.

[192] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 10. Price notes in n19 of the same page that many bishops of the East had already subscribed to the Tome of Leo because the pope required formal agreement with it in order for the East to be restored to Roman communion. This took place well before the Council of Chalcedon convened, and so these bishops entered the council already in agreement with the Tome.

[193] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 10.

> This is the faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Apostles. So we all believe, thus the orthodox believe. Anathema to him who does not thus believe. *Peter has spoken thus through Leo.* So taught the Apostles.[194]

The only objections that were ever raised to the Tome came from a small minority of bishops from Illyricum and Palestine.[195] These saw a conflict between the Tome and St. Cyril's Christology, which had become dogmatic since the Council of Ephesus (431). The imperial commissioners reluctantly decided a committee should be had for five days so that these objectors "may be instructed"[196] by a portion of the rest of the bishops who had already signed. But of the six hundred[197] or so bishops present, these two groups were in the extreme minority. Thereafter, in the fourth session, the bishops were called upon by the imperial commissioners to assemble and outwardly state, in the presence of the divine gospels, if they understood St. Leo's Tome to be in accordance with the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople (381).[198] The bishops then proceeded to state that the Tome was in harmony with the creeds and with Cyril's Christology. Following this, the bishops of Egypt (i.e., those who were influenced by Dioscorus prior), ten in number, asserted they could not sign the Tome since they were accustomed to making decisions only under the primacy of their archbishop, the president of the church of Alexandria. Since Dioscorus was deposed in the first session, the Egyptian bishops were headless in that regard. Even so, they made it clear that they agreed with the council on the content of the Tome, but that this mere formality prevented their signature.[199] The outspoken Cecropius of Sebastopolis stated that such a formality was immaterial since an "ecumenical council is greater than the Egyptian diocese, and more worthy of respect."[200]

The Egyptians responded by saying that if they didn't adhere to this

---

[194] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 24.

[195] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 4; Price, "The Council of Chalcedon: A Narrative," 74–78. See Rivington, *Roman Primacy*, 267. This amounts to approximately fifty of the six hundred or so bishops at the council, which makes up less than 10 percent of the council.

[196] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 27.

[197] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 187.

[198] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 127.

[199] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 151.

[200] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 151.

policy, they could suffer persecution from their kinsmen back home.[201] The imperial commissioners stepped in and spoke on their behalf stating that these Egyptians had withheld their signatures to the Tome "not out of opposition to the catholic faith but on the grounds that it is the custom in the Egyptian diocese to do nothing of the king without the approval and decision of the archbishop."[202] Knowing that an ecumenical council was greater than this Egyptian policy, the imperial commissioners appealed to "compassion" in order to let the custom apply in this case, as an exception. Not sufficiently satisfied, Paschasinus, legate of Rome, insisted that they give some sort of guarantee that they adhered to the Tome, such as not leaving the city of Chalcedon until they acquire an archbishop to finally give his signature. It was understood to be practically just as good as already subscribing to the Tome.

Some readers might look at the fourth session, where the bishops stated their adhesion to St. Leo's tome as in accordance with the creeds and Cyril's letters, and deduce from this that they were all freshly examining the Tome for its authenticity, and only then respecting it with irreformable authority. But, as shown, the majority of the bishops had already subscribed to the Tome even before the council through the correspondence of Sts. Leo and Anatolius. Secondly, it was not the idea of the bishops to have themselves openly profess the Tome to be in harmony with the Truth, but it was the idea of the imperial commissioners. They were the ones who explicitly required the bishops to do this, and it was most likely for the sake of formal procedure and legal accountability. They had known that the Tome was controversial to some bishops, and it was crucial to have these pronouncements recorded in the *Acts*, with everyone's name written down to vouch for their profession. This can be compared to a priest when he asks an engaged couple to exchange vows. The vow exchange is not the moment of conviction but the moment of an official adherence. This formality does not create the agreement which already exists. Another example would be in the court of law when someone is required to take an oath. The person may already be unswervingly dedicated to telling the truth, but they are required to publicly vocalize it for the sake of being held accountable. In the same way, the emperor's representatives required the bishops to give public statement of the Tome's essential harmony with prior definitions, and each bishop's name was recorded for accountability and consensus. In this sense, they

[201] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 151 and 152.
[202] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 153.

were not freshly coming to a decision that the Tome was correct, as if the Tome were hitherto under question, but rather were exercising their duty, at the behest of the imperial commissioners, as ordained pastors in making a solemn judgment on the faith vocally. They must not just agree with the Tome but give public and official agreement in the form which makes it unmistakable that it is in accordance with the Church's Tradition.

As Fr. Luke Rivington said,[203] when Catholic bishops delved into the question of the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the most blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Council of Trent, held in the sixteenth century, for the sake of refuting the Protestant errors, they were not calling into question the teaching on transubstantiation that had already been dogmatically held from the Council of Lateran (1215). Nor were the Catholic bishops at Florence, held in the fifteenth century, intending on calling into question the dogma of the *Filioque*, formally accepted already at the Second Council of Lyons (1204). At Florence, a variety of topics were discussed which were not on the table of revision by the pope. And yet, the Latin bishops willfully entered the field of examination on these topics for the sake of formality and on behalf of the Greeks, for whom these matters remained questionable.

If such condescension could be operative in an era that no one denies was characterized by the papal supremacy of Rome, then how could it be that the same sort of condescension exercised by Pope St. Leo the Great exemplifies a denial of said supremacy? In fact, in our context above, St. Leo wrote to the Emperor Theodosius II requiring the newly elected bishop of Constantinople, St. Anatolius, to sign the Tome. And if he would not, the pope would petition the emperor to summon the bishops to a council in Italy "so that, if all those come together in one place who have fallen either through ignorance or through fear, *measures may be taken to correct and cure them*, and *no one any longer may be allowed* to quote the Synod of Nicæa in a way which shall prove him opposed to its Faith; since it will be of advantage both to the whole Church and to your rule, if one God, one Faith and one mystery of man's Salvation, be held by the one confession of the whole world."[204] Here St. Leo reveals that there are more reasons to hold a council than simply to "determine"

[203] Rivington, *Roman Primacy*, 390–91.

[204] Leo, Letter 69, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604069.htm (emphasis added).

or "ascertain" the truth. Rather, the council is also a measure to make the faith clearer for those who have trouble understanding it. What better than the presence of many counselors to show forth the wisdom of the Holy Spirit?

Now, while St. Leo's Tome was, from the get-go, upheld by the council to be definitive and a successful means of quashing the heresy of Eutyches, the Emperor St. Marcian had plans to make a *new definition* of faith. At first, the bishops were hesitant about this, seeing as how the Tome of Leo and prior definitions *were already sufficient.* But the imperial commissioners were given a specific assignment by the emperor, and so they required it. Plans for making a draft for this new definition were set up in the second session, where a committee had been designated to construct one. By the fifth session, the same commissioners brought the idea back to the table about a new definition constructed by the council. The question was whether the draft for a new definition made by the committee was satisfactory to the bishops. This draft had been criticized by papal legates since it was not emphatically reflective of Leo's Tome. Right after the first draft was presented, the papal legates opened their mouth:

> If they do not agree with the letter of the apostolic and most blessed man Archbishop Leo, order letters to be given us so that we may return home, *and the council will be concluded there.*[205]

As said, the first draft had not been clear on the continuing duality of the two natures in Christ, and so there were calls for a reform to that draft. When the bishops couldn't reach an agreement, the imperial commissioners consulted with the emperor, who then threatened the bishops that if they did not settle for a change to the draft in accord with the protests of the papal legates, then he would enforce the council to move its venue to Italy so that the pope himself could personally preside over it.[206] The threat must have been felt. Sure enough, the first draft was amended:

[205] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 197.

[206] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 183. This means St. Marcian must have read the letter St. Leo sent to Theodosius II, which originally requested the council to be held in Italy, where Leo could ensure his Tome was read and accepted, contrary to Ephesus (449), but held it as an emergency measure. Presumably, Nicaea and Chalcedon were first suggested as easier venues for Eastern bishops, which explains why they were chosen as the first options.

> Then add to the definition *in accordance with the decree of our most holy father Leo* that there are two natures united without chance, division or confusion in Christ.[207]

Thus, Chalcedon's first draft for a new definition of faith was amended by the impending consequence of having to face a far stricter accountability under the supervision of the pope. At the end of the day, "the council was an enormous victory for St. Leo—his Tome was identified as one of the foundational articulations of Christological orthodoxy."[208] Despite what efforts were put in place by opponents of the Tome, the authority of the Apostolic See was on clear display. Both in letters to the council and in statements made at the council, no hint of available reformations to the Tome were permitted. St. Leo, a pope who "carried the papacy as far theoretically as it could go,"[209] in whom the "dynasty of Peter, Prince of the Church, was established, solemnly, and decisively," overcame the heresy of Eutychianism and taught a clear and cogent Christology for the new era of theological development. With such explicit data on the matter of the papacy, it is even more noteworthy how prominent St. Leo is in Byzantine's holy memory.

## WAS THE TOME OF LEO INFALLIBLE?

One question that has been variously answered throughout history is whether the Tome of Leo was a papal *ex cathedra* teaching and whether the eastern bishops received it as such. This is a difficult question to answer, and much of the substance of the papal dogmas do not hinge on a positive or negative answer. Whether the Tome was, *ipso facto*, infallible by the divine intervention of God seems to have little relevance to the disputes between Orthodox and Catholics. The more relevant question is whether the Church Fathers understood a pope's official teaching to be, *ipso facto*, infallible.

It should also be borne in mind that this question of the precise nature of papal decrees was a matter of theological development, much like how the contemporary Orthodox Church is still trying to figure out the institutional primacy in Orthodoxy as well as the mechanics of a successful pan-Orthodox Council. Answers to these questions differ among

[207] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 200.

[208] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 61.

[209] Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, second ed. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 137.

all kinds of Orthodox theologians around the world. If the same courtesy could be extended to the Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility, then expecting all questions concerning the precise authority of papal decrees in the fifth century may be too much to ask. To no surprise, even within Catholicism, the doctrine of papal infallibility, as defined at Vatican I, has not always been the universal opinion by all theologians since the beginning. As late as the seventeenth century, there were debates over the sacred rights of the papal ministry. All sides professed formally the papacy itself in its basic concept, but just precisely what the sacred rights and prerogatives were was not something which had dogmatic clarity.

To some extent, that lack of clarity still exists today. Historically, I refer here to the debates which ensued between the Gallicans versus the papalists. The former had been of the mind that papal power, while real and divinely instituted, had short limits, particularly on the matter of doctrinal decrees. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet,[210] a prolific historian and theologian of the seventeenth century, authored a famous book *Defensio Declarationis Conventus Cleri Gallicani*, which was a defense of Gallican ecclesiology. He was the "main redactor"[211] of the Declaration of 1682, which included four articles on papal power, that is, the four Gallican articles. The one article of relevance is the fourth, which states:

> In questions of faith the *leading role* is to be that of the Supreme Pontiff; and his decrees apply to all churches in general and to each of them in particular. But his judgment is not unchangeable, *unless it receives* the consent of the Church.[212]

Bossuet could argue for the papacy "as the historic and *essential center of unity* in the Church but recalled also the Church's conciliar and collegial traditions."[213] Concerning this fourth article of the Gallicans, Bossuet sees the Council of Chalcedon as "illustrating the thesis" that it is "the consensus of the *pope and bishops* on the doctrine that gives it its 'irrevocable strength,' not the authority of the pope alone, 'which then no

[210] See Richard F. Costigan, S.J., *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility: A Study in the Background of Vatican I* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 35–62 (emphasis added).

[211] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 38.

[212] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 18.

[213] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 17 (emphasis mine).

one thought of.'"[214] In a subsequent generation, a famous Italian papalist theologian, Pietro Ballerini (1698–1769), would rise up to challenge this fundamental thesis of the Gallicans, in particular to Bossuet. For Ballerini, it was a clear contradiction to say, as Bossuet did, that the pope is the essential center of the Church's unity (i.e., essential, meaning the Church cannot do without it) if that center cannot, of itself, attribute a coercive authority unto itself in order to produce the unifying function. The idea here is that in the presence of a multiplicity of wills going in different directions, it would take one coercive will in order to consolidate all the opposing wills into this center, thereby establishing a healthy center of unity.[215] Without this capacity, what good is such a center?

In one interesting piece from Ballerini, in reply to Bossuet, he points the latter to his publication entitled *Variations*, which includes a criticism of the Lutheran Reformed Philip Melanchthon. Bossuet had criticized Melanchthon for finding certain conditions upon which to reject papal authority. "If each one, Bossuet there notes gravely, may appeal to his own reasons for considering papal authority oppressive, then the Church authority would become subject to the whim of all."[216] That carries a bit of irony.

There are some more important aspects of Ballerini which must be noted. Having been selected by Pope Benedict XIV (1740–1758) to make a new edition of the works of Pope St. Leo I, which later was published and "incorporated by Jacques-Paul Migne in the Patrologia Latina,"[217] Ballerini is suited to speak to this issue about St. Leo and Chalcedon. Speaking to the issue of whether bishops gathered in an ecumenical council have the "liberty" to examine papal decrees, Ballerini concedes as much, but such liberty does not "liberate them from the submission and assent that all owe out of obedience."[218] The Eastern bishops at Chalcedon "were not allowed (*non licuit*) to dispute the definition. They were allowed, on reading over his definition, to add their judgment to the pontifical, exclaiming, 'Peter has spoken through Leo!,' so as to help persuade any dissidents to return to unity."[219] Ballerini sees the episcopal function at Chalcedon to be pedagogical rather than a setting where

[214] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 51.
[215] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 100–101.
[216] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 100.
[217] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 95.
[218] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 101.
[219] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 102.

doctrine is freshly and formally tested, weighed, and judged, as if the question of Christ's dual-nature were on the table for debate.

Another papalist theologian, Giuseppe-Agostino Orsi, O.P. (1692–1761), took up the task of responding to Gallican arguments. On the Tome of Leo and the bishops at Chalcedon, Orsi understood that the examination given to the former does not imply that it was reformable. Orsi seemed to think, by way of the Conciliarist César Guillaume de La Luzerne (1738–1821) who summarizes Orsi, that the pope "permits this through a sort of indulgence, to provide more gently for the weak or ignorant persons."[220] St. Leo's allowance of his Tome to be examined was the result of an "indulgent goodness" which "permitted a new judgment on questions of faith already sovereignly decided by themselves so that truths unshakeable in themselves, and already judged irreformable by [popes] are put in a new light."[221] La Luzerne, on the contrary, understands that the bishops at Chalcedon actually ratified a reformable Leonine Tome and *made it irreformable*. "When the Pope and a council both pronounce on a doctrine, 'they reciprocally communicate to each other *a new degree of authority*.'"[222]

If the pope is absolutely restricted to this, then this is the essence of the Gallican thesis. The bishops at Chalcedon made a true examination of the Tome, which means that, for the Gallican, it had the potential to fail that examination. In this reading, the council was open to the possibility of Pope St. Leo being a heretic. This should be, at the very least, contrasted with St. Leo's statements, well recorded above, that the delivery of the Tome to the emperor and the council was tantamount to their consultation with the Apostle Peter, whose faith was the infallible standard determining membership and non-membership from the Church altogether. The Gallican reading, which may or may not align with the Eastern bishops at Chalcedon, is overtly rejecting the infallibility of the pope's *ex cathedra* decrees. If perfect truth were guaranteed, no place should be given for testing whether it is true or not.

Still another papalist theologian, Giovanni Perrone, S.J., spoke of two distinct kinds of examination, that is, *examen confirmativum* and *examen dubitativum*.[223] "The former means to examine something

[220] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 143. Interestingly, St. Leo himself mentioned the method of a council in order to better convince the elderly Eutyches of his error.

[221] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 143.

[222] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 144 (emphasis added).

[223] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 177.

simply in order to concur with it or confirm it. The latter means to examine with the liberty to assent to it or dissent from it. In the case of a papal definition of doctrine, no one, including a council, has the right or power to conduct a dubitative examination of it." For Perrone, this is actually demonstrated by the dogmatic letters, not just of St. Leo to Chalcedon, but also of Popes Sts. Celestine and Agatho to Ephesus (431) and Constantinople (681), respectively. He deduces this from the fact that their decrees were dictated by the popes as the "norm that these councils were to follow, expressly warning in instructions that they gave to their legates, that *nothing in* [the missives] *relating to the faith could be changed*."[224] According to Richard F. Costigan, S.J., professor of theology at Loyola University Chicago, the famous exclamation of the fathers at Chalcedon, "Peter has spoken through Leo!" is interpreted differently by Gallican and papalist interpreters. In his own research, he follows the conclusion of the Jesuit Fr. Wilhelm de Vries in saying that a divergence of ecclesiologies between East and West would have yielded diverse opinions on the *ipso facto* status of the Tome. Costigan admits, however, that contemporary scholarship tends to agree with the interpretation of the Gallicans.[225]

During the proceedings of the First Vatican Council, some were outspoken against the concept of papal infallibility. For those who were against, especially Bishop Hefele, the Tome of St. Leo and the Council of Chalcedon's reception of it made for a strong multi-faceted argument *against* papal infallibility. The bishops were called to judge the Tome by subjecting it to examination. It was not simply accepted because it was written by the pope. Some bishops even suspected it of heresy, and they were not reprimanded for having such a suspicion.[226] Still maintaining his respect for the divine institution of the papacy, Hefele said, "I yield to no one in reverence for the Apostolic See and the Holy Father: but do not think it lawful to proceed to a declaration of the infallibility. Bishops are witnesses, not arbiters of the Father."[227]

In response to this, archbishop of Saragossa, Emmanuel Garcia Gil, argued that St. Leo's Tome was far from "being subjected to the free judgment of the Council" since the "Pope had instructed his legates *to allow*

[224] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 177 (emphasis added).

[225] Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 102n15.

[226] Dom Cuthbert Butler, *The Vatican Council 1869–1870: Based on Bishop Ullathorne's Letters* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1962), 306.

[227] Butler, *The Vatican Council*, 306–07.

*of no change in it.*"[228] Even current day Catholic theologians, who live on the right side of Vatican I, agree with Hefele and have understood that, while St. Leo's Tome was, in his own mind, definitive and irreformable, the view of the council was that it had the right to judge and correct it:

> In the view of Rome, the papal decision ought to have been accepted without further discussion and simply ratified by the council; in the view of the eastern bishops who made up the vast majority at all these councils, *the council itself had every right to test the papal teaching in the light of Scripture and tradition, and only after full discussion of the issue, come to its decision, which, in their view, would be the really definitive one.* . . . The Roman view was that it should accept the pope's decision because, as successor to Peter, he had received from Christ the authority to decide questions of faith for the universal Church. The eastern bishops were ready to accept the papal teaching *when they were satisfied that it was consonant with Scripture and tradition.* Without doubt their acclamation: "Peter has spoken through Leo," in their intention, *meant not that Pope Leo had spoken with Peter's authority, but that Leo's teaching reflecting genuine apostolic tradition.*[229]

While this squares nicely with the modern Orthodox scholarship that was reviewed earlier, it leaves the student of history with the difficulty of having to choose between which fronts were the authentic traditional view, that is, the view intended by Jesus Christ. The first thing to observe here is that prior to the First Vatican Council, there were Roman Catholic bishops and theologians who were continuing to examine the rights that papal decrees possess in themselves, however much the papalist side had been supported in Rome. The modern Catholic doctrine is, therefore, the result of a gradual development. In fact, one could still confess the papal dogma of universal jurisdiction, as well as the divine, perpetual, and irreversible institution of the Chair of St. Peter, while also believing that papal decrees require the consent of the Church's bishops, whether gathered in council or dispersed abroad, before those decrees achieve an irreformable status. Therefore, if one were to make a case that St. Leo's

[228] Butler, *The Vatican Council*, 307 (emphasis added).

[229] Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 68.

Tome was issued as a document of reformable authority, however great that sort is, such a case could fall within the realm of the pre-1870 and post-1054 papal framework allowability.

Consequently, showing that St. Leo's Tome required the assent of the bishops of the council does not, *ipso facto*, lend immediate support to Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology. Since the Roman Catholics who supported the fourth Gallican article of the Declaration of the French clergy were papalist insofar as they understood the divine and apostolic origin of Rome's primacy of doctrine and jurisdiction, each based on the *Tu es Petrus* investiture from Christ to St. Peter, and that such arrangement of the pope as hierarchical head of the Church could not be thwarted by any human or ecclesial power, *there is no such thing as a Byzantine-Gallicanist.* Even the most fundamental paradigm of Petrine primacy in Gallican theologians is still radically at odds with the ecclesiology of the Byzantine Orthodox, all because the latter has ditched the divine institution of the Roman primacy and has relegated it to something extrinsic to the nature of the Church. That is not a belief consonant with the Gallican theologians.

It seems clear to me that there is no simple answer to the overall question. Who can deny that the bishops from Palestine and Illyricum were prepared to challenge the Tome? They were prepared to not only challenge the bishop of Rome but even to outright sever communion with him! To be fair, there were even more bishops in the regions of Egypt, Syria, and Armenia who were willing to challenge Chalcedon as a council itself! In this mindset, folks were ready to forego the need to submit to this or that bishop or ecumenical council, and leave the final determination to *themselves, regardless of how small in number their respective schools would become.*

The schools of antiquity show enough examples of differing paradigms of authority such that one can find something as subjective as the privatization of the faith, meaning the Truth is what I know to be true, to something as objective as *Roma locuta, causa finita.* Nevertheless, once again, the overwhelming majority of bishops at Chalcedon had, according to Fr. Richard Price,[230] opened the council expecting to ratify

[230] Price, *Chalcedon in Context*, 74–75. Now, this observation does not, by itself, intend to say that the majority of bishops at Chalcedon received the Tome as true without even reading it or assenting to it according to their own understanding. I've already mentioned above that the majority of bishops had already signed the Tome well before the council was convened. Does that mean it is possible that these bishops were open to St. Leo being a heretic whenever they were called to sign the Tome? It is possible, but given the contextual summary and

the Tome without examining it or entering it into questionable status. In other words, the majority of the bishops had been convinced that St. Leo, being gifted by the authority of St. Peter, spoke the truth definitively even before the council.[231] Still, some Orthodox critics have pointed out that this observation leaves aside the question of what motivated the majority of bishops at Chalcedon to have already agreed with the Tome. It had been said that, before Chalcedon was even convened, the emperor had ensured that the Tome was agreed with in order to rectify the problem of Ephesus II (449). Thus, a Catholic cannot point to the *a priori* acceptance from the bishops at Chalcedon as if they agreed with it automatically because of its author being the bishop of Rome, and not out of their own agreement. This may have been involved in their decision making, but there is not enough evidence to be certain.

But this is not somehow evidence against the Catholic doctrine of papal authority and infallibility. It would be a grievous mistake to think that the papal office were to simply require automatic and unquestionable assent of the episcopal government of the Church. The whole purpose of St. Leo's Tome was to *actually persuade* the episcopal body such that they, too, might understand how what was being said accorded with the Tradition. Think of the role of a genuine and authentic teacher: Would the teacher be solely concerned with obtaining the mindless assent of his students? Would their pronouncing that they automatically agree without making their own assessment of the doctrinal material really suffice to achieve the goal of the educational process? Such a simplistic understanding of the purpose of a school, teacher, and learning students is quite petty and useless. In order to achieve the maximal goal of schooling, students must be convinced themselves that what they are learning matches reality, not merely give *a priori* submission to whatever the teacher says.

If we can borrow from this analogy and bring it to the context of the papacy and the Eastern bishops, we have a better lens through which to interpret what is going on. The pope, says the First Vatican Council, occupies the office of supreme judge in all matters related to the content of faith. As a result, if one were to isolate the context of the pope

the corroborative evidence overall, it seems nearly impossible to believe that these bishops, at least in a great number, did not see the divinely gifted St. Peter speaking through the pope in a matter related to his office as St. Peter's successor. That concept seems to lurk in many statements in the council and in or around the historical context.

[231] Cecropius, Bishop of Sebastopolis, said that "all" had signed the Tome before it was even read aloud at the Council; see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, 10.

and the Church to the bare minimum *de jure* principle of authority, the whole Church would be required to assent to authoritative papal decrees whether they internally understand the content to be true or not. Yes, this purely *de jure* model is very far from what the Catholic magisterium employs in the task of shepherding the flock of Christ. The use of the brute force of legal authority and the threat of excommunication has its place, but seeking to reach agreement between *practically equals* in doctrine through the natural course of inquiry and rationality comes first in the order of importance.

Do we actually think that St. Leo spent the labor to write his lengthy Tome to be a piece of decoration without the other bishops ever having actually read, studied, and verified its contents? The goal is not to gain mere assent but for the bishops to be convicted that their assent accords with what they understand to be the Truth. When there is no way to come to an agreement in faith through the natural process of inquiry and rational dialogue, then the context of the courtroom enters in and the judge has to slam the gavel with a binding judgment that does not depend on the agreement or disagreement of the accused or the accuser.

We can see that, after Chalcedon was completed, St. Leo was no longer interested in giving further place for the testing ground of inquiry but was firm on simply excommunicating the dissidents by the pure force of authority.[232] Dissent from his first Tome mounted in the East after Chalcedon. But even then, he further acquiesces and writes a second Tome[233] at the request of Emperor Leo I (457–474), on behalf of the dissidents in the East for the sake of their repentance. Here, the pope, once again, returns to the gracious context of dialogue and rational inquiry. But neither by his acquiescing in the case of Ephesus (449) and Chalcedon, nor of this second Tome did this somehow suggest that the supreme authority in St. Peter's throne was ever denied as being there in the background, on which, if all else failed, the church could fall back ultimately. To those Orthodox who see St. Leo's willingness to allow his first Tome to be examined by the Council of Chalcedon (although, as we saw, he was never of the mind to allow dissent) as proof of the Tome's lack of irreformable authority, one might ask further if the second Tome is proof of Chalcedon's lack of irreformable authority? I would think all

[232] Leo, Letter 156, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604156.htm.

[233] Leo, Letter 156, *New Advent*.

Orthodox would answer in the negative. It is clear that St. Leo thought Chalcedon was infallible and irrevocable, and yet he acquiesced to write up another theological work to try to further convince the dissidents. It was no different with his first Tome.

*This proves that St. Leo's first instinct was to convince and not to resort to the pure force of legal authority, even when he thought infallible decrees had already been laid down.* Seeing this demeanor in St. Leo, is there any evidence that he or anyone else thought his Tome was an infallible decree (*ex cathedra*) that preceded Chalcedon and the second Tome? We have a few letters that might offer sufficient evidence as to how to understand this question. The first was one written by Pope St. Leo to Theodoret of Cyrus, and in this he explained how he understood the authority of his Tome from the moment he sent it off to the East. He rejoiced in the victory over heresy at Chalcedon and how, under providence, God had brought the union of head with members:

> Wherefore we make our boast in the Lord, singing with the prophet: "our help is in the name of the Lord, who has made heaven and earth": who has suffered us to sustain no harm in the person of our brethren, but has *corroborated* by the irrevocable assent of the whole brotherhood *what He had already laid down through our ministry*: to show that, what had been first formulated by the *foremost See of Christendom*, and then received by the judgment of the whole Christian world, had truly proceeded from Himself: that in this, too, *the members may be at one with the Head.*[334]

From this, St. Leo understands that God had already *laid down* the truth in the *formulation* of the Apostolic See, and the council agreed and ratified. Certainly what God lays down cannot contain error. Was the council's reception of his Tome an extra adornment of authority upon the Tome that was not previously there? What does St. Leo say? He says the purpose of the council's further corroboration was for God to show that the Tome proceeded from himself. Did the Tome, then, lack this sort of showing prior to the council's reception of it? It would seem reasonable that if by the Tome's production at Rome it did not have the stamp

[334] Leo, Letter 120, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604120.htm (emphasis added).

of approval from God and only gained this by the council's reception of it, then we have a good case for the Tome not being an *ex cathedra* teaching, or not being one of infallible and supreme authority. If St. Leo had stopped there, this would be the most reasonable reading. However, he goes on:

> For lest the *assent of other Sees* to that which the Lord of all has appointed to take precedence of the rest might seem *mere complaisance*, or lest any other evil suspicion might creep in, *some were found to dispute our decisions before they were finally accepted.* And while some, instigated by the author of the disagreement, rush forward into a warfare of contradictions, a greater good results through his fall under the guiding hand of the Author of all goodness. For the gifts of God's grace are sweeter to us when they are gained with mighty efforts: and uninterrupted peace is wont to seem a lesser good than one that is restored by labours. Moreover, the *Truth itself shines more brightly*, and is more bravely maintained when what the Faith *had already taught* is afterwards *confirmed by further inquiry.* And still further, the good name of the priestly office gains much in lustre where the *authority of the highest is preserved without it being thought that the liberty of the lower ranks has been at all infringed. And the result of a discussion contributes to the greater glory of God when the debaters exert themselves with confidence in overcoming the gainsayers: that what of itself is shown wrong may not seem to be passed over in prejudicial silence.*[335]

The rightness of a physics theory can be shown to someone either by appeal to authority or by demonstration. One can purely appeal to Isaac Newton to persuade someone of the laws of motion, or they can demonstrate the theory through a rigorous exercise of reason. In the latter case, the truth is seen more clearly by the beholder even if there is no reason to doubt from the appeal to authority. In St. Leo's mind, the Lord had providentially allowed the evil of skepticism toward his Tome for the purpose of having to demonstrate its truth through argument. By passing this inspection with flying colors, the veracity of the Tome is better

[335] Leo, Letter 120, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

confirmed and is not merely assumed to be right in "prejudicial silence." However, these are circumstantial remarks.

What did St. Leo say of the Tome itself? He said it carries the "highest authority" by virtue of its being produced by the Apostolic See. Any authority that is the highest is supreme and unchallengeable. But if challenged, it affords the opportunity that he describes. In addition, if we harken back to that Christo-Petrine structure[236] of ecclesial order that St. Leo taught in his sermons and letters, whereby Christ governs and guides the universal Church through St. Peter, it is clear that St. Leo's confession in the Tome is St. Peter's *infallible precursor* to the universal Church's conciliar judgment. It is not as if St. Peter's confession renders completely redundant the Church's judicial voice in council. Rather, by a slight tension, both are upheld to freely manifest themselves in their own right. Lastly, the greater clarity or greater assurance is not a denial of the definitive sufficiency of the Tome itself, but rather a providential benefit according to the principle that an object's quality is seen better when put under testing. All in all, St. Leo concludes:

> For that God has dispelled all calumnious fallacies, *we attribute to the blessed Peter's wondrous care of us all, for after sanctioning the judgment of his See in defining the Faith*, he allowed no sinister imputation to rest on any of you, who have laboured with us for the Catholic Faith: because the *Holy Spirit adjudged* that no one could fail to come out conqueror of those whose Faith had now conquered.[237]

In a separate epistle to the emperor, St. Leo compared the newly found confidence in the Tome to be akin to the Apostles whose initial doubting caused the objective exposure of the Lord's wounds, *which in turn made everyone more confident and less doubtful.* Christ understood that by taking the hand of St. Thomas and actually putting it on his wounds, he would condescend to allow the natural course of human inquiry to take its place. Of course, this was not ideal, but it was an act of mercy and grace. To further doubt beyond such a proof would be mortally sinful and unbelieving. The allowance of the Tome to be brought under inspection was an act of condescension. St. Leo wrote to Emperor Marcian:

[236] Explained further below.

[237] Leo, Letter 120, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

> For as in believing the Lord's own resurrection, with a view to strengthen the beginnings of faith, *confidence was much increased* by the fact that certain Apostles doubted of the bodily reality of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by examining* the prints of the nails and the wound of the spear with sight and touch *removed the doubts of all by doubting*; so now, too, while the misbelief of some is refuted, *the hearts of all hesitaters are strengthened*, and that which caused blindness to some few avails for the enlightenment of the whole body.[238]

Since this was meant to explain the doubting of the Tome by the small minority of bishops at Chalcedon, then St. Leo compared the weak faith of the Apostles in their hesitation to believe the Lord's resurrection with the "hesitators" at Chalcedon who doubted his Tome. When St. Marcian was succeeded by Emperor Leo, there were further outbreaks of doubt in the East against even the authority of the Council of Chalcedon and Leo's Tome. Emperor Leo then wrote to the pope in order to inquire whether to hold *yet another council* to decide upon a working doctrinal resolution for everyone. Apparently many thought the convocation of Chalcedon itself was a blank shot without any authority. This led to, as referred to already, the second Tome sent off to the East.

Initially, St. Leo responded and discouraged such thinking, since it tends to give into unbelief and rebellion, for since, "the universal Church has become *a rock* (*petra*) through the building up of that *original Rock*, and the *first of the Apostles*, the most blessed *Peter*, heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Thou art Peter and upon *this rock* (*petra*) I will build My Church,' who is there who dare assail such impregnable strength, unless he be either antichrist or the devil."[239] Nevertheless, in this letter to the emperor, St. Leo finally acquiesced and said he would write yet another doctrinal treatise to follow from his first Tome in order to satisfy, more so out of mercy than justice, the remaining "hesitators":

> I have comprised in another letter what is agreeable to the maintenance of the catholic Faith, in order that, *though the published statements of the Apostolic See were sufficient*,

[238] Leo, Letter 104, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604104.htm (emphasis added).

[239] Leo, Letter 156, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

> yet these additional statements might also break down the snares of the heretics.[240]

The original Tome, says St. Leo, was sufficient. The Council of Chalcedon was doubtlessly sufficient. Now, again, he produced another decree more than thrice sufficient. The point was clear. If we rewind all the way back to when the pope informed the emperor and the Council of Chalcedon of the status of his Tome, we can already see this language of sufficiency and irreformability. In his letter to the Council of Chalcedon itself, the pope writes:

> Wherefore, brethren most dear, let all attempts at impugning the Divinely-inspired Faith be entirely put down . . . since in accordance with the authoritative statements of the Gospel, in accordance with the utterances of the prophets, and the teaching of the Apostles, *with the greatest fullness and clearness in the letter which we sent bishop Flavian* of happy memory, *it has been laid down* what is the loyal and pure confession upon the mystery of the Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation.[241]

Here, St. Leo again made it clear that his Tome, being "laid down," was the divine faith to be maintained. Therefore, even before the Council of Chalcedon was held, the pope did not believe that his Tome originally needed any official additives for it to be binding. If one takes the above rationale and keeps it together with St. Leo's other commentary from his other epistles and sermons, especially with this top-down model of grace and truth flowing down from *Christ to St. Peter*, then *St. Peter to his successors*, and then the *popes to the universal Church*, one can see how he understood the Tome to be divinely irreformable. To repeat what he had said in one sermon:

> Peter . . . received the fullness of blessing and was endued with the holy firmness of the inviolable Rock on which the Church should be built and conquer the gates of hell and

[240] Leo, Letter 156, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[241] Leo, Letter 93, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604093.htm (emphasis added).

> the laws of death, so that, in loosing or binding the petitions of any whatsoever, *only that should be ratified in heaven which had been settled by the judgment of Peter.*[242]

Taking from this Christo-Petrine formula, a great deal of weight is shifted over to support the view of his Tome as, in his understanding, an infallible document. Bossuet, on the contrary, used *Letter 120* of St. Leo to Theodoret of Cyrus, examined above, in order to prove the fourth Gallican article, that is, that the Tome received authority *only after it was accepted by the council*, but, as the papalists would say to the Gallican, St. Leo was never going to allow his Tome to be reduced from an irreformable document, and that much is shown thus far.[243] The Christo-Petrine order is that Christ governs all through St. Peter, and the rock-strength that inheres in Christ is shared to St. Peter, and through St. Peter the same fortification is provided for all the bishops, and even the whole Church. To say that the Tome of St. Leo increased in its authority after the council received it would be to disrupt this order. There is also the possibility that St. Leo understood his Tome to be the non-negotiable content while the council was the authentic juridical sphere where it gets ratified. This might seem to run the risk of a redundancy, but it is certainly compatible. Leo's Tome being the irreformable confession of faith sent off to a council for the sake of the council ratifying it, and thereby bringing it into official ecclesial law, seems to line up with how the Tome was delivered. And this matches what happened in the future with the dogmatic letters of Popes St. Agatho and Hadrian I to the Councils of Constantinople III and Nicaea II, respectively.[244] The process of events before and during the Council of Jerusalem (49) may serve as a paradigm for how the Petrine gift was applied in the first millennium of ecumenical councils. God himself came to St. Peter and instructed him on the truth that Gentiles would not be required to be circumcised. No one doubted St. Peter. But it took a council to bring the facts into ecclesiastical law. Perhaps St. Leo's letter to St. Flavian was just this preliminary judgment of the pope protected by divine assistance, and thereby undeniably true, which gets put into the legal forum of an ecumenical council.

---

[242] Leo, Sermon 51, *New Advent* (emphasis mine).

[243] Bossuet, *Gallia Orthodoxa*, 61: Oeuvres, 9. 40A (Paris, 1836), as referenced in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 315.

[244] Daley, "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches," in *Church Unity & The Papal Office*, eds. Braaten and Jensen, 49–52.

## Excursus on Papal Infallibility and the Episcopal College

Before leaving this discussion about the relationship of the pope to Chalcedon, it might assist the reader if a treatment is given to the oft-made objection that the First Vatican Council's definition of papal authority renders the position of the bishops of the other churches to that of mere students and puppets of the pope. In other words, the universal jurisdiction of the pope and his power to teach all Christians authoritatively is thought to effectively dwarf the other bishops to merely tools of the pope. This is partly due to the fact that the First Vatican Council, which had formally published *Pastor Aeternus*, didn't get the chance to publish a second decree on the powers of the episcopate because of the abrupt ending of the council due to the Franco-Prussian war.[245] There had already been a draft document on the power of the bishops in the Catholic Church, but due to the council's unpredicted close, "an ecclesiology lacking balance was the result."[246]

With the formation of the decree *Lumen Gentium* at the Second Vatican Council, Catholic bishops were able to restore "equilibrium to ecclesiology."[247] The Second Vatican Council taught that when the bishops are gathered into an ecumenical council under the pope, they "are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church, whose definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith."[248] But how can they be authentic teachers and judges if they have to automatically submit to the pope? In the first place, the bishops are not mere students and vicars of the pope because the Catholic Church teaches that, by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, they possess immediately from Christ the duty of being true pastors, both to their respective flocks and to the universal Church. This is because when Christ charged the Apostles to teach and disciple the nations, the episcopal college, which succeeds the Apostolic College, also receives this charge equally. Thus, bishops, as successors to the Apostles, have a direct assignment from Christ to teach and judge.

Since this is divinely instituted, the successor of St. Peter has no choice but to work in harmony with the whole episcopal college. In other

[245] Miller, *The Shepherd and the Rock*, 214.

[246] Miller, *The Shepherd and the Rock*, 214.

[247] Miller, *The Shepherd and the Rock*, 214.

[248] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, by Pope Paul VI (November 21, 1964), §25, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

words, just like the supreme authority of ecumenical councils do not have the authority to change what has been divinely instituted, so also the pope has no authority to cancel or put out of commission the episcopate which Christ established. So, although all bishops depend on their communion with the pope as the head of the episcopal college for their legitimate status as bishops, the pope must abide by the whole episcopal college in the manner in which it has been established by Christ, and any unlawful attempt to relativize the episcopate would be a transgression of papal power.

Therefore, in the context of an ecumenical councils, the bishops show up as true office-holders that are possessed with authority directly from Christ, and co-judge and co-teach with the head of the episcopate. If they showed up holding no capacity as teachers and judges, or if their status as judge and teacher were delegated by the pope, then they would be more or less mere students and vicars of the pope.

The reaction to this seemingly empty promise of balance is to reiterate that the pope has supreme authority and can, if he'd like, enact a decree which everyone has to submit to, including all the bishops. The First Vatican Council forces the Catholic to concede to this. Even this rule does not obliterate the true authority that exists in the office of bishops. In the United States Army, you have the real authority of captains, colonels, generals, and the commander-in-chief. Generals must obey the commander-in-chief, colonels must obey generals, and captains must obey colonels. Just because the commander-in-chief has jurisdiction over generals does not mean that the office of general becomes a mere puppet of the commander-in-chief. The same goes for every other office down to the captain or sergeant. It would be nonsense to think that captains are vicars of the commander-in-chief so they have a real authority attached for their office despite their being accountable to a higher authority. No one reasonably says that all offices subordinate to the master-in-chief are mere puppets of the latter with no true authority of their own. They are accountable to a higher rank, sure, but that does not obliterate the rights and prerogatives allotted to them according to their own ranks. It just means they are all accountable to the chief commander.

Even so, this clarification seems to still leave open the objection of many Orthodox critics of the papal ecclesiology: if the papacy is true, why hold ecumenical councils? Or, if the papacy is true, there can't really be a true and authentic council because, as Fr. Sergius Bulgakov pointed out, "The pope possesses in himself all the fullness of '*charisma veritatis*'

inherent in the Church."[249] Consequently, Bulgakov reasons, "he has the power to proclaim the truth infallibly, in the name of the Church, '*ex cathedra*,' and this is exclusively of his own personal knowledge and not from the collective knowledge of the Church." Beyond this, but the pope "not only proclaims the truth held by the Church, he not only commands, as supreme representative of the hierarchy, faithfulness to that truth, but he testifies himself to that truth, he possesses it, he discovers it for the Church."[250] In contrast to this, Bulgakov offers the Eastern Orthodox paradigm which says that each "member of the Church, inasmuch as he shares in the life of the Church, lives in the truth; this is why infallibility belongs to the whole Church." For the Orthodox, says he, "it is unthinkable that the mind of the Church, its very conscience, should belong *to one only among its members*, to a hierarchy placed above the body of the Church and announcing to it the truth."[251]

With such a view of the Catholic papacy, it is no wonder that Bulgakov rejected it, and saw it as incompatible with the historic Church. The Catholic Church does not teach that the gift of infallibility pertains only to the successor to St. Peter. It is a firm opinion that both Catholics and Orthodox hold to the infallibility of the Church since Christ says that gates of hell shall never prevail against her. The Church cannot ever become a society whose teachers authoritatively lead men to heresy and the consequent result of hell. The Catholic Church teaches that the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit applies various manners of protection from error, only one of which is the authoritative pronouncements of St. Peter or his successor. The gift of infallibility extends, under various circumstances, to all the bishops of the episcopal college, even dispersed throughout the world. The bishops of the ecumenical councils are likewise under a special gift of infallibility when enacting, with the pope, dogmatic teaching on faith and morals. And not only this, but the Catholic Church also teaches that the gift of infallibility pertains to the whole body of the faithful, including the laity. In one of the most famous postconciliar clarification documents after the Second Vatican Council issued by the CDF, the following is stated:

> God, who is absolutely infallible, thus deigned to bestow upon his new people, which is the Church, a certain

[249] Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 58.

[250] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 58.

[251] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 59 (emphasis added).

> shared infallibility, which is restricted to matters of faith and morals, which is present when *the whole People of God* unhesitatingly holds a point of doctrine pertaining to these matters, and finally which always depends upon the wise providence and anointing of the grace of the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church into all truth until the glorious coming of our Lord.[352]

This harkens back to the issue of religious epistemology. Non-Catholics are often mistakenly under the impression that the papal agency of infallible truth is the only agency of infallible truth in the Catholic Church. That is false. There are several. The above citation teaches that the whole Church cannot err in faith. The Second Vatican Council's document *Lumen Gentium* states that the "whole body of the faithful . . . cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) on the part of the whole people, when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful,' they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals."[353] Contrary to what Bulgakov insisted, the Catholic faith holds to a universal infallibility of the whole body of the Church, as the Holy Spirit fills all. And, as stated in an earlier chapter, the bishops are also a special agency of infallibility both as they actively teach individually and dispersed throughout the world, under certain conditions. In particular, the gift of infallibility applies through the agency of the bishops in an ecumenical council:

> The infallibility promised to the Church *resides also in the body of Bishops*, when that body exercises the supreme magisterium with the successor of Peter. To these definitions the assent of the Church can never be wanting, on account of the activity of that same Holy Spirit, by which the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith.[354]

---

[352] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium ecclesiae*, Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day (June 24, 1973), §2, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19730705_mysterium-ecclesiae_en.html (emphasis added).

[353] *LG*, §12, citation from *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second ed (New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 34, §92.

[354] *LG*, §25.

Still, some might ask, given the doctrine of the First Vatican Council on the authority of the pope, what purpose do ecumenical councils play anymore? This is the question that was posed during the communication of Monsignor Vincent Gasser's *relatio* during a session of the First Vatican Council, and it is on this *relatio* that I will be basing my next few points. Gasser is called the "most prominent theologian" of the First Vatican Council,[255] and his *relatio* became such an important document representing the meaning of papal infallibility that it would become "cited in innumerable manuals and theological treatments," and was significantly cited in *Lumen Gentium*, §25, on the magisterium at the Second Vatican Council. The material in this document, therefore, is highly qualified to give meaning to a commonly misunderstood subject. Gasser posed the concern: "It has been said that henceforth general councils would no longer be necessary," which rehearses an objection put forward by many who contested the forthcoming dogma of papal infallibility. To this Gasser responded:

> I answer: they will be necessary in the future as they were necessary in the past. They were never absolutely necessary if what you are talking of is only a matter of Christians of good will knowing the truth with certitude. For they were able to know the truth through the ordinary Magisterium of the Church, that is, *through the bishops having communion with the Apostolic See*. . . . Therefore, general councils *were not necessary in order to know the truth, but in order to repress errors*. Since errors were flourishing in such a way that the Christian commonwealth was in a certain way endangered, the Catholic Church opposed to them its most solemn judgment through a general council. But the most solemn judgment of the Church in matters of faith and morals is and always will be the judgment of an ecumenical council, *in which the Pope passes judgment together with the bishops of the Catholic world who meet and judge together with him*. But some go on to say that general councils in the future will not be free; the bishops will no longer be true judges. I reply: they will be free as they were free in times past. For even future councils will be held in such a way

[255] Bishop Vincent Ferrer Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility*, trans. Rev. James T. O'Connor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 8.

> that, as far as things to be treated in the council are concerned, there will either have been no previous dogmatic definition of the Roman Pontiff or there will have been a previous dogmatic definition. In the first case, if the Pope leaves to the council all the propositions to be fully treated, the council will be able to use its *full liberty in the Lord*; in the second case the council will do all that which past general councils have done in a similar situation.[256]

Gasser goes on to give as an example of a "similar situation" at the Sixth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople (681), which upheld the letter of Pope St. Agatho as the norm of the faith to be followed. Then, he continues:

> In this way, therefore, the holy synod, in a solemn judgment, *reconciled the obedience due the Roman Pontiff with its own liberty* "so that (as the words of Leo concerning the Council of Chalcedon say) what was first formulated by the First See, the judgment of the entire Christian world might receive as having come forth from them, so that, in this also, the members might be in harmony with the head." In this harmony of the members with the head there clearly shines forth the assistance of the Holy Spirit as promised to the Church. Thus did the sixth holy synod act, and all the others have acted in the same way.[257]

---

[256] Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility*, 40–41 (emphasis added).

[257] Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility*, 43. A wonderful section of an article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* shows how, in ecumenical councils, the multi-faceted protection of the Holy Spirit is active in more ways than simply assisting the successor of St. Peter. Dr. Joseph Wilhelm states: "The infallibility proper to the pope is not, however, the only formal adequate ground of the council's infallibility. The Divine constitution of the Church and the promises of Divine assistance made by her Founder, guarantee her inerrancy, in matters pertaining to faith and morals, *independently of the pope's infallibility*: a fallible pope supporting, and supported by, a council, would still pronounce infallible decisions. . . . The infallibility of the council is intrinsic, i.e., springs from its nature. Christ promised to be in the midst of two or three of His disciples gathered together in His name; now an Ecumenical council is, in fact or in law, a gathering of all Christ's co-workers for the salvation of man through true faith and holy conduct; He is therefore in their midst, fulfilling His promises and leading them into the truth for which they are striving. His presence, by cementing the unity of the assembly into one body—His own mystical body—gives it the necessary completeness, and makes up for any defect possibly arising from the physical absence of a certain number of bishops. The same presence strengthens the action of the pope, so that, as mouthpiece of the council,

St. Robert Bellarmine also spoke to the objection that says if the pope is infallible, then councils are unnecessary:

> I respond: that does not follow. For even if infallibility might be in the Pontiff still he *ought not* condemn human and ordinary means whereby one can arrive at a truth of faith in the treatment of some matter. . . . That is clear from the example of the Apostles. Certainly both Peter and Paul were able to infallibly define any controversy you like as individuals but they still called a council in Acts chapter 15. . . . Besides, councils are very *useful and often necessary* to really put an end to controversies by not only making decrees on faith, but also preserving them. For when a general council happens all the bishops subscribe and profess themselves to embrace that decree, and afterwards they will preach in their churches; but if a general council does not happen, it is not so easy to reduce a decree made on faith to practice. It is possible that some may feign ignorance of a decree; others might complain they were not called and others even openly say the Pope could err.[358]

Even as late as 1963, Pope St. Paul VI rehearsed the correction against the idea that Vatican I rendered ecumenical councils superfluous when he opened the second session of Vatican II.[359] There are, therefore, a variety of reasons to hold ecumenical councils, not least of which is simply attempting to discover the dogmatic truth of the Christian faith. When and if a pope has not given a definitive pronouncement on a doctrinal matter and submits it to the council to be judged upon, the pope is giving liberty to the council to utilize the God-given authority of the bishops in co-judging and co-teaching together with the head of the Church. If the pope has already given a definitive pronouncement, then the liberty to dissent from that is not granted to the council, but the bishops are still

---

he can say in truth, 'it has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,' and consequently can, and does, put the seal of infallibility on the conciliar decree *irrespective of his own personal infallibility*" (Wilhelm, Joseph, s.v. "General Councils," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04423f.htm [emphasis added]).

[358] Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Tomus II*, vol. 2, *On the Roman Pontiff*, trans. Ryan Grant (Mediatrix Press, 2015), 172 (emphasis added).

[359] John R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (New York: Herder and Herder Co., 1999), 81.

called to use their God-given authority to add their judgment so that head and members might be joined in one transparent unity.

Even so, St. Robert Bellarmine argues that ecumenical councils are not, *ipso facto*, necessary to know the truth. He appeals to the first three centuries, where no ecumenical council was held at all, but nevertheless, with the bishops coordinated under and with the pope, they arrived at a judgment which would only be called in the future by the reordering of the human race to God's intentions. Presumably, if the Church could exist for three hundred years without an ecumenical council, it could live two thousand years without an ecumenical council as well. They are, therefore, pure accidents insofar as the essence of the Church of Christ is concerned.

What then is essential to the Church of Christ that procures infallible doctrine on faith and morals? It is either a direct binding judgment from the successor of St. Peter or the world-episcopate in some form of collaboration under and with him (i.e., "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name," etc.). Either of these can be achieved without a physical council. To be clear, as said above, the whole Church is protected from error and is inhabited by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, who fills the Church, making it the holy temple of God. However, there is a special assignment and promise given to the leadership of the Church, that is, the episcopal college, such that it has the prerogative to teach, rule, and govern the universal flock of Christ. Within this episcopal college, you have a head and member organization, and special promises are given to both, respectively. While the whole body is infallible, and while there are various conditions for when the bishops are infallible, there is also the unique set of conditions where the head of the episcopate is also infallible.

In Catholic theology, the Apostle Peter was given the chief custody of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, was established as the chief shepherd of the universal flock, and was personally prayed for by the Lord so his faith would not fail and that after being strengthened, he would, in turn, strengthen his brethren. Taking this basic paradigm of Petrine uniqueness from Holy Scriptures, the Catholic Church understands that the successor of St. Peter has a unique right to teach and is simultaneously protected by the Lord from error in light of the prerogative of the keys, which symbolize final and supreme judgment, and the divine promise of being strengthened in faith. This occurs when the pope teaches on a matter of faith or morals to be definitively and irrevocably held by the whole Church, otherwise called *ex-cathedra* decrees. The authority and

irreformable stature of these decrees does not have as its cause the agreement of the bishops of the Church giving their consent.[260] Other than deriving this from the handed-on Tradition of the Church, the theoretical motivation for this Petrine charism was stated explicitly at the First Vatican Council:

> This gift, then, of truth and never-failing faith was conferred by Heaven upon Peter and his successors in this Chair, that they might perform their high office for the salvation of all; that the whole flock of Christ kept away by them from the poisonous food of error, might be nourished with the pasture of heavenly doctrine; that *the occasion of schism being removed the whole Church might be kept one*, and, resting on its foundation, might stand firm against the gates of hell.[261]

So herein is the ground of this Petrine charism by God's design. It is intended to prevent schism and to keep the doctrinal content of the Church the same. One is given this role of supreme judgment considering the reality that when there is a supreme rule of many, the possibility of schism and endless division still remains. In other words, there needs to be a clear and visible organ in the Church which stops the mode of inquiry and debate and makes an irreformable or unchallengeable decision for the sake of unity. For Catholicism, that organ is the pope, or an ecumenical council presided over and ratified by the pope. Orthodox theologians, such as Fr. Bulgakov, who argued forcefully in his book *The Orthodox Church* for the Khomyakovian paradigm of ecclesial authority, ironically still manage to recognize this need for a part of the Church to act as *supreme arbiter* on matters of faith:

---

[260] "*Ideoque eiusmodi Romani pontificis definitiones ex sese, non autem ex consensu ecclesiae irreformabiles esse.*" Citation from *Select Documents Illustrating Medieval and Modern History*, ed. Emil Reich (London: P. S. King & Son, Orchard House, 1905), 245; "Such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable" (from Edward Pace, s.v. "*ex cathedra*," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05677a.htm). It should be noted that while the *consensu* (agreement) of the bishops is not a cause to the authoritative effect of pontifical *ex cathedra* definitions, that does not mean that the pope has the freedom to violate that *consensu* since said *consensu* is another rule of faith.

[261] *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John H. Leith (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), 456 (emphasis added).

> Thus it *may be said* that the supreme ecclesiastical power, under the form of a council of bishops—ecumenical, national, or even diocesan—has, in practice, the right to declare necessary doctrinal definitions and that these definitions ought to be accepted, barring exceptional and specially justified cases. Disobedience to ecclesiastical power *is in itself a grave fault,*[262] a heavy burden on the conscience, even though it is sometimes inevitable. Thus the higher leadership of the Church is vested with an authority, *"infallible" in practice, which is sufficient for the needs of the Church.*[263]

Astonishingly, here Fr. Bulgakov vests the council of bishops with the holy rights of declaring doctrine authoritatively, and that to go against it would be to incur sin! There is no greater way to describe a subject of ordinary authority in the Church over certain subjects. On top of that, these authoritative councils are "infallible" in practice. Just what Fr. Bulgakov means by this is extremely difficult to pin down anywhere in the book, for while he speaks of the council having the right to teach infallible doctrine, he then describes the infallible decrees of the Catholic Church as only "relatively infallible,"[264] and even curiously compares it to what the Lutherans might have at one time called "relatively infallible," namely, the *Augsburg confession*. The comparison made between Orthodoxy and Protestantism here is significant, but for our purposes it will be neglected. Fr. Bulgakov, holding to the receptionist theory, means by "relatively" infallible that any given council's decree *might* be infallible given the condition of a *post ex facto* validation of it through the process of the "whole Church" receiving it. And yet, as William Cohen observed,[265] Fr. Bulgakov denies that this act of reception is tantamount to a "plebiscite" (a count of votes) or a mere Church-wide vote from all her members.[266]

---

[262] But if, as Fr. Bulgakov says elsewhere, the Truth is equally diffused throughout all the baptized, why wouldn't the statements of a council require the need for everyone to agree before it becomes a "grave fault" to dissent?

[263] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 79–80 (emphasis added).

[264] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 80.

[265] See William Cohen, "Bulgakov and von Balthasar on Vatican 1," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 58:4 (2014) 401–415, https://www.academia.edu/20412429/_Bulgakov_and_von_Balthasar_on_Vatican_I_St_Vladimirs_Theological_Quarterly_58_4_2014_pp_401_415?auto=download.

[266] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 74.

How then does Fr. Bulgakov understand the ecumenicity of a council is confirmed? He has no choice but to say that it is the "sanction of a supreme hierarchy."[267] In a quite unexpected shift, Fr. Bulgakov goes from criticizing the very idea of a special "charism of truth" in the episcopate as an imposing authority[268] to later admitting that a *hierarchical voice* is needed for the confirmation of a council to be manifestly ecumenical. Nothing could illustrate this tension between spontaneous illumination from the Holy Spirit (i.e., "the Spirit blows where He will," etc.) and the security that is achieved with a God-authorized magisterium to maintain visible unity in the Church.

Even though Bulgakov wants to steer clear of an absolute *a priori* ecclesial infallibility, whether of the pope or the bishops, he still recognizes that "there must be means in the Church to prevent issues of great theological moment from remaining indefinitely *up in the air*."[269] This is expanded upon even further in when he states the following:

> The episcopal order possesses the authority to safeguard the purity of doctrine in the Church, and, in the case of profound differences in the heart of the Church, *can render a decision having the force of laws.* Such a decision *should put an end to dissensions.* Those who do not submit are automatically *cut off from the Church by anathema.* This has been the usual procedure in the history of the Church. The judgment of the councils of bishops is proclaimed *by its presiding officer.*[270]

Striking! This, according to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, is what it means to reach an infallible decision.[271] Nevertheless, Fr. Bulgakov finds a way to avoid that conclusion. Notice how he above senses the need for an organ of authority that can say, as the sign on the desk in the oval office of President Harry S. Truman stated, "The buck stops here." Otherwise, dissensions can be indefinite, and schismatic formations can solidify, rendering permanent damage to the visible unity of Christ's Bride. He then says these decisions carry the binding force of law, even as proclaimed

[267] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 74.

[268] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 56–60.

[269] Cohen, "Bulgakov and von Balthasar on Vatican 1," 403 (emphasis added).

[270] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 76 (emphasis added).

[271] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium, An Interview with Peter Seewald*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 182.

by the presiding officer, which he admits was once the bishop of Elder Rome.[272] In recent exchanges between Catholics and Orthodox in dialogue, the latter have been constant in appealing to the real authority of councils, consisting of head (patriarch or pope) and members, if and when they follow the rule of Apostolic Canon 34. As seen before, this canon stipulates that the head cannot pass judgment without the "consent of all," and the bishops are not to pass judgment themselves without the consent of the head. Therefore, only when head and members join in agreement can their council be deemed authoritative and official.

The problem with this ideal of a successful council, which Cohen rightly calls a "miraculous balance,"[273] is that such a unity of head and members is not guaranteed. What then? Fr. Bulgakov does well in figuring that the Church's visible unity, which, as shown above, the Orthodox hold as vital and essential to the Church, requires a certain organ of authority wherewith it can stop the buck, and put an end to dissensions. But if this buck-stopper relies on the cooperation of a presiding head of a council and the members therein, what serves as a buck-stopper when head and members (at least a sizeable quantity) are themselves at odds with each other?

The Orthodox might be prepared to defer to the "majority" when head and members are at odds. For example, if the pope is in error, the majority can muscle over him and canonically depose him. But even in that case, there is a dependence upon having a sizable number that can be reasonably identified *as majority* versus the head (and whatever minority may agree with him). When the head is contrary to all, such a problem does not exist. However, when it is a majority versus a minority, the matter requires more discernment, especially when the line dividing majority and minority is not clear anymore. At this point, the Orthodox can no longer appeal to Apostolic Canon 34 since the canon depends on winning the requisite cooperation. A similar problem plagued the ultra-conciliarists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who sought to dogmatize the Church's magisterium to a group of bishops with or without a head at all.

The problems continue to stack, however. A question of whether "majority" always equals "the correct view" comes to mind. I do not know of any Orthodox theologian who would argue that the majority, *ipso facto*, will always be the sole carrier of truth. As Fr. Georges Florovsky said, "It

[272] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 76.

[273] Cohen, "Bulgakov and von Balthasar on Vatican I," 406.

may so happen that during the council the truth will be expressed by the minority,"[274] or even "without a council."[275] In that case, neither Apostolic Canon 34 nor the *a priori* preference for the majority proves to be a solution to the threat of schism. Fr. Bulgakov insists on the principle of "sobornost" ecclesiology, which certainly favors the majority.[276] And yet, oddly enough, he can only manage to concretely describe the principle of unity as a council which is vested with binding authority to put an end to theological questions, as proclaimed by the primate, and he has no concrete suggestions for solutions when the preconditions for such a council are missing. Is the Bride of Christ then left with no solution to prevent schism?

What makes the matter a bit more difficult is that even when a council is somewhat successfully achieved, Fr. Bulgakov still insists that the council might not resonate with the Church after all, thereby proving its "pseudo-conciliarity,"[277] in other words, falsity! Councils though they were, they were not ultimately received by the Church. What force then does the supreme hierarchy have whose decisions must be obeyed on pain of "grave fault?" And so, even though Fr. Bulgakov equips the Church with a discriminate organ of authority (a sub-group) which has the binding force of law, whose decisions render all dissidents guilty of "grave fault," whose authority puts an end to schism, and from which dissidents are "lawfully anathematized," he still persists in his denial of its *a priori* infallibility and allows for it to entirely become null and void through a *post ex facto* rejection by the whole Church of a different time. With no set time parameters on this process of reception, the majority of the Church could potentially be decided upon something that is, in reality, false, and only later come to realize it. Such an apparent inconsistency is upheld in order to prevent a binding monarchic papacy and sustain "the palladium of Orthodox liberty."[278]

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has moved forward to speak of an *a priori* infallibility as secured in both a council that has a cooperation of head and members but also in the case of the head alone, when enacting *ex cathedra* decrees. The motive, besides divine Revelation, is clearly seen in that there really does need to be a place where "the buck

[274] Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, vol. 1 (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), 52.

[275] Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, 52.

[276] Cohen, "Bulgakov and von Balthasar on Vatican 1," 407.

[277] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 77.

[278] Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 80.

stops," and where that takes place, there must be an unchallengeable, recognizable, and yet divinely protected force of authority. The Orthodox Church proposes a certain kind of constitution for councils that accounts for ideal circumstances, and when those circumstances are not realized, the constitutional form of authority is relegated to several different models, which get less and less objective and shift according to one's particular opinion. Since the truth can be carried by both the head and members together, the head as a minority alone, the members as a minority, or the members as a majority against the head or minority, the carrier of truth is left to be verified simply by one's own perception of the truth. It leads one to toss one's hands up, in a sense, and finally admit that there are no set external criteria on which the test of infallible truth can ultimately depend, and the messiness of history is left for us to contend with. This harkens back to the section on *Epistemological Considerations*, but the idea here is that what counts, at the end of the day, is the truth, and one knows the truth simply by one's own ability to successfully perceive it in each case.[279] It is a quasi "survival of the fittest" epistemology.

It is, therefore, understandable how the Catholic Church has understood for many centuries that the doctrinal court of the Apostolic See must be vested with an authority to teach and judge infallibly and without having to depend on any measure of consent from either the episcopate or the Church at large. This preserves the possibility of a final decision that is manifestly clear, cannot be challenged, and deserves the unconditional assent of all members of the Church.

However, we must not escape the tension that is created herein. We say the Apostolic See is equipped as such, but then the question of just precisely how this prevents the episcopate from becoming a mere puppet of the pope rears its head again. The bishops of the Church have a divine commission from Christ to teach and govern the Church, and the pope cannot change this any more than he can obliterate the authority of his own office, which rests upon the same divine origin. And thus, there is a certain bind upon the pope himself to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit and his ministry in the whole episcopal college. Since the gift of infallibility also is given to the episcopate as a whole, the Church as a whole, the patristic consensus as a whole, and the pope as the head, there will be an essential agreement between all these agencies where they are conditionally infallible. Although there is no capacity for competition,

[279] With this paradigm of authority and epistemology, one wonders whether there can ever be an objective criterion by which to judge between the Catholic Church and all the various Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

both the episcopate and the head of the episcopate are equipped with the sacred rights of magisterium even when the former are dependent on the latter.

Undoubtedly, a tension arises here. Since Christ calls both the episcopate as a whole and St. Peter (and his successor) to proclaim the infallible truth to the world, he must equip both with the means of doing so. That means the voice of the whole episcopate itself has a factor in what the pope is bound to believe and teach, even across time. And since the pope is bound by divine Revelation, he is under a strong, perhaps indefinite, moral obligation to abide by those divine monuments that surround him in the form of the bishops, councils, prior papal decrees, canon law, the *sensus fidelium*, and so on and so forth. Admittedly, there is no absolute legal necessity for him to do so, but given the natural course of education and the sober delicacy of the task of being pope, it can be considered sinful for the pope not to consult with the Church and acquire its consent in the production of *ex cathedra* definitions. In the end, the Catholic is left to trust that this construction is maintained by the providential assistance of the Holy Spirit. Without this, no ecclesial construction avoids being vulnerable to exploitation.

Going back to St. Leo's Tome, then, I would argue that more than one possibility exists. The Tome could have been an infallible decree before it was issued to the council, thereby removing the liberty of dissent from the council bishops. The Tome could have been an authoritative instruction before it was issued to the council, leaving it to the bishops to join their own deliberations to it or even challenge it in favor of a different proposal. Within the first case, it may have been recognized as divinely irreformable by some or all the bishops, or none of them (that is least likely). Within the second case, it might still be said that the pope was not ultimately going to maintain the council's liberty to dissent, thereby enacting a threat of excommunication upon the whole council if it did not submit. In any of these possibilities, the commentary provided in the above sections on St. Leo and the Council of Chalcedon still provides sufficient material from which to make a strong case that *papal infallibility*, as a concept, is derived from the historical and theological context.

## Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch: All Sees of St. Peter?

It is well known by students of history that the Sees of Antioch and Alexandria were attributed primacies, considering their connection to

St. Peter. Wouldn't it be hasty to relegate all the import of this to Rome and not Antioch, especially? Who better to answer this question than the very saintly pope we have just examined? If we rehearse the viewpoint of St. Leo on the uniqueness of the Apostolic See, we will find the answer to these questions.

In the *first place*, contrary to the encyclicals of the Eastern patriarchs (1848/1895), St. Leo held that Christ divinely situated Peter alone as the chief head and authoritative primate of the Apostles. *Secondly*, Leo held that to Peter was given special promises, particularly that of being the fortified rock of the universal Church by his "ongoing sharing" with Christ, the ultimate Governor of the Church. *Third*, Leo held that the symbol of the keys being given to Peter shows a unique position as the doorkeeper and judge at the gates of the kingdom of God on earth, the Church. *Fourth*, that from Peter follows a juristic succession that inherits his Christ-given primacy. *Fifth*, that this primacy descends through said succession in the stationary episcopate of the Roman church, where Peter himself was enthroned as bishop. And *lastly*, the *Tu es Petrus* investiture given by Christ to Peter endures in his successors and must remain. All of that is justified by the data, and it may cause one to wonder how the Eastern Orthodox have included in the Menologion of Basil II, the synaxarion of St. Leo, which refers to him as a second Moses sent by God to be the "morning dawn from the West, thou, thrice Blessed, sentest forth thy volume of holy dogmas as rays of light upon the Church."[280]

But it remains that St. Peter presided in the Antiochene church, and insofar as this occurred, the See of Antioch was the See of Peter too. Then there is the See of Alexandria, which tradition called both the See of Peter and the See of Mark. With three Sees of St. Peter, what makes the Roman one so special? To answer this question, one must observe the work of the late historian Dr. Walter Ullmann to see precisely how it is that St. Leo and his predecessors understood the relationship between St. Peter and the Roman church in a way that is exclusive to itself.[281]

Ullmann points out how St. Leo spoke as if St. Peter himself were living, acting, judging, and speaking through him. There is a "continuity of Petrine powers in the pope."[282] This could not be caused by the mere fact that St. Peter's tomb was present in Rome with his relics. Borrowing from Roman law and jurisprudence, St. Leo utilized the term "heir" to define

[280] S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 206.

[281] Walter Ullmann, "Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 11 (April 1960), 25–51.

[282] Walter Ullmann, "Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy," 26.

the unique nature of the Roman primacy in contrast to other regions where St. Peter may have contributed. As heir of St. Peter, the bishop of Rome obtains the fullness of what Christ bestowed upon him in the *Tu es Petrus* investiture. Ullmann sufficiently describes this Leonine usage of Roman law concerning the heir to describe the Petrinology at work:

> According to Roman law the *heir continues the deceased*—this was one of the most fundamental Roman law principles relating to the law of inheritance: it is based on the principle of *juristic continuity between the deceased and the heir.* The heir replaced the deceased and stepped into the shoes of the dead person. The heir takes over all assets and all liabilities of the deceased. . . . Legally, therefore, there is *no difference between the heir and the deceased*: the latter is literally continued in the former. . . . In brief, there is, so far as the law is concerned, *juristic identity between the heir and deceased*—from the legal point of view the dead of the latter merely entailed change of the physical person, but not change of the rights and duties which are simply transferred to a different individual.[283]

Therefore, between the other two Petrine sees (Alexandria and Antioch) stands this unique status of the Roman bishopric as the place where St. Peter continues to live on, with a juristic continuity, in his successors. Added to this is the element of perpetuity, such that St. Peter "always" lives and presides in his own See, as St. Leo pronounced. What the Roman bishop teaches and judges, it is what St. Peter teaches and judges. If we tie together the fundamental Leonine "sharing together" between Christ the Lord and St. Peter in the universal governance of the Church, Ullmann reaches the correct conclusion by saying that the "totality of Petrine powers equaling the totality of Christ's powers is juristically continued in the heir of St. Peter."[284] This usage of Roman law in St. Leo is key for understanding how the Roman See's primacy is not only

[283] Walter Ullmann, "Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy," 33–34.

[284] Walter Ullmann, "Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy," 49. See also Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *The Papacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 26. Schimmelpfennig describes the Petrine inheritance to be "transpersonal" (not wholly tied to the occupant of the Roman bishopric) and, "with the help of Roman law," a way in which each bishop of Rome was a "valid heir of Peter," possessing the "*cathedra petri*." See also the fantastic commentary in Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 285–308.

distinct from the primacies of Alexandria and Antioch by superiority of rank but also a difference of kind.

Therefore, the Petrine succession which exists in Antioch, for example, does not carry the "juristic continuity" between St. Peter and the Antiochene bishop, but said continuity exists between the former and the Roman bishop. This concept also explains why it is that Rome could never envisage the idea that the See of Constantinople should obtain "equality" with the Rome's Petrine inheritance. Such an idea is alien to the idea of inheritance. A Father may have many sons, but there is only one heir, and thus the papal inheritance cannot be shared with another or transferred without some legal exception. St. Peter continues to live on "both now and forever" as the *Acts* of Ephesus (431) records Philip, the papal legate, saying, and this was the policy held by Rome.

*Chapter Thirteen*

# The Primacies of Old and New Rome

In 381, Eastern bishops had passed a certain canon, its third, which implied that the Church of the newly established imperial city of Constantinople should be assigned the first place in the hierarchy of sees after the Roman church. To the bishop of Constantinople, "let him have the prerogatives of honor after the bishops of Rome, seeing that this city is the new Rome."[1] Many Orthodox apologists have recited this canon as a way to disprove the papacy, since, the argument goes, an ecumenical council had asserted that Rome's primacy came not from divine or apostolic considerations but rather simply because the bishops of that city-church were granted special privileges in light of its being the imperial capital of the Roman world. More specifically, the Byzantine Orthodox point to this canon in order to show that a Roman primacy, according to the *Tu es Petrus* investiture, was not the original cause of her primacy and rests rather entirely on transitory foundations. In other words, if the Roman primacy is founded upon changeable circumstances, then it carries no divinely permanent character. This common argument should be, once and for all, put to rest.[2] Since the majority of the meat of

[1] Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, 1996), 119.

[2] My commentary is largely inspired by A. St. Leger Westalle's "The Fathers Gave Rome the

this claim comes from the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon, most of the content below will be fixed on the delicate history surrounding the attempt of the Easterners to execute the canon into law at the council's final session.

As was shown, Pope St. Leo was, out of all the popes throughout the early Middle Ages, the most adamant about the Petrine origin of Rome's universal primacy. And yet, when the bishops of Chalcedon wrote their synodal letter to him requesting his ratification of its twenty-eighth canon, there was not a single hint that St. Leo understood the canon as threatening the Petrine origin of Rome's universal primacy. In fact, the bishops of Chalcedon themselves were well aware of St. Leo's claims if not by his own letter then from statements made by the legates at the council (their sentence against Dioscorus, for example). If these bishops knew well that Rome understood its primacy to have derived from the investiture given to St. Peter and his successors by the Lord Jesus Christ, *then emphatically contradicting this in the very synodal letter which seeks his approval for their own canon seems to be quite out of place, not to mention counter-productive.*

Let me be clear: the very letter that the Council of Chalcedon, as a corporate body, wrote to St. Leo at its closing admits that the Tome was the voice of St. Peter and that the Lord Jesus Christ had given to the bishop of Rome the "custody of the vine" (i.e., pastoral responsibility of the universal Church). This was the letter that held the request for the pope's ratification of the council's twenty-eighth canon. When St. Leo reacted to the council's request for the elevation of Constantinople, he only revealed two concerns related to legal violations. The first concern stated that the new arrangements involved in the twenty-eighth canon unlawfully modified the order of sees set in stone from the sixth canon of the Council of Nicaea (325). There, Alexandria and Antioch are the second and third sees of Christendom, and this primatial order was the "ancient custom" far before the fourth century, even stretching back to the apostolic era. His second complaint reveals the underlying problem of the canon, namely, that it was based on secular principles rather than divine. The Eastern bishops were trying to work from the divine pattern with secular material, and St. Leo held that the apostolic missions of St. Peter in Antioch, Alexandria (via St. Mark), and Rome gave the churches of these cities a permanently divine character.

How can we better understand, therefore, precisely what was going

Primacy," *The Dublin Review*, vol. CXXXII (January–April 1903): 108–112.

on in the third canon of the Council of Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451)? I think the matter becomes clarified when we answer the question of just what Constantinople was seeking. In other words, what "privileges" were the bishops asking for by these canons legalizing a Constantinopolitan primacy? Once this question is answered, the story begins to make much more sense. The fully developed canon (28) was stated as follows at Chalcedon:

> Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges (ἴσα πρεσβεῖα) to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; *so that*, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans only and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople; every metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of his province, ordaining his own provincial bishops, as has been declared by the divine canons; but that, as has been above said, the metropolitans of the aforesaid Dioceses should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom and have been reported to him.[3]

[3] Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), "Canon 28," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3811.htm (emphasis mine).

Notice the bishops at Chalcedon seek to maintain what had already been passed sixty years prior by the 150 bishops at the Council of Constantinople (381) in its third canon. Secondly, they equate both the secular status of the cities of Rome and Constantinople and proceed to use this as grounds to equate the two churches. Undoubtedly, since the new city of Byzantium had become the new Rome in the secular dimension, then certainly the church in this new city should be New Rome in the ecclesiastical dimension. What seems quite obvious, as noted by Dr. Susan Wessel, professor of Early Christianity, is that Constantinople, New Rome, "was to be given jurisdictional privileges that were modeled upon those of the senior Rome."[4] But what kind of jurisdiction and to what extent? It would appear by the details outlined in the canon, the aim was to obtain a wider patriarchal primacy *in the East*, that is, within the territories of the Pontic, Asian, and Thracian dioceses. What the bishops asked for was not to be awarded equality with Rome's unique mission to the universal Church, founded in St. Peter by the Lord.

However it was understood, the papal legates responded by saying that the sixth canon of Nicaea was being violated and that the third canon of Constantinople (381) was not counted among the "conciliar canons,"[5] (i.e., accepted as ecumenical). Rome had never ratified the canons of that council so as to be regarded on the level of the Church's universal canons. This council was convened by Emperor Theodosius I in 381, but it was a purely regional council of the East. It did not have the full representation of Rome, nor did Rome ever review it and ratify it for the universal Church. In fact, even the patriarchs of Alexandria rejected the third canon, and they only began to do so when they were forced after the Council of Chalcedon.[6] The Oriental Orthodox, following the lineage of the anti-Chalcedonian episcopates in Egypt and Syria, still did not recognize this canon, despite their holding the Council of Constantinople (381) as ecumenical.[7] According to Hefele, the Council of Ephesus (431) made no mention of the Council of 381, and Ephesus II (449) explicitly only mentions two ecumenical councils, Nicaea (325) and Ephesus (431).[8] For Pope St. Leo, the canons at the Council of 381

[4] Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 302 (emphasis added).

[5] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, trans. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (Liverpool University Press, 2005), 84.12

[6] Shenouda M. Ishak, *Christology and the Council of Chalcedon* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2013), 443–45.

[7] Ishak, *Christology and the Council of Chalcedon*, 443–45.

[8] Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*,

were in no way ratified by the Apostolic See in his time. In a letter to St. Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople, St. Leo states:

> For your purpose is in no way whatever supported by the written assent of certain bishops given, as you allege, *60 years ago*, and *never brought to the knowledge of the Apostolic See by your predecessors.*[9]

Even well after St. Leo's time, a council was held in Rome in 485 at which only three ecumenical councils were listed by the Apostolic See: Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.[10] Even as late as the beginning of the seventh century, Pope St. Gregory the Great said that the Apostolic See only received its creed, but not its canons.[11] Even when the West had inscribed the Council of 381 into the list of official ecumenical councils, it did not ever give unqualified credence to its third canon, as is evidenced by the rejection of it by Pope St. Nicholas I in the ninth century. The first time we see Rome giving any kind of official recognition of Constantinople taking primacy after her over the other Eastern patriarchs is the twenty-first canon of the Council of Constantinople IV (869) and more officially in the fifth canon of the Council of Lateran (1215). But by then the canon was interpreted through a resolutely Roman lens, which preserved her divine foundations. For whatever reason, therefore, the canon was not quickly accepted by the whole Church.

What about it created such a difficulty? However we answer that question, it should be clearly stated that the Byzantine bishops were not trying to attack the Petrine prerogatives of the Roman bishop over the universal Church. The evidence for this is clearly seen in Chalcedon's own conciliar epistle to Pope St. Leo seeking his ratification of the council. In

---

vol. 2, *A.D. 326 to A.D. 429* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), 370–74.

[9] Leo, Letter 106, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604106.htm; the same idea is communicated in Letter 105 to Pulcheria Augusta.

[10] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 314.

[11] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 252n4; Pope Gregory the Great wrote concerning this council: "But the Roman Church does not possess so far these same canons, or the acts of that council, nor has it accepted them, though it has accepted this same synod with regard to what was defined by it against Macedonius" (see Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 7.34, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second Series, vol. 12 eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360207034.htm.

that letter, the bishops clearly say that the pope acted as the "mouthpiece unto all of the blessed Peter," that he was "chief" and "head" to the whole synod of 520 priests, and that he had been "charged with the custody of the vine *by the Saviour*."[12] And yet, they say in the twenty-eighth canon that, just like Rome was given primacy *by the Fathers* for its being the capital of the Roman Empire, so now Byzantium should have the same.

It is likely that by "Fathers" was meant the tradition of the Apostles. In other words, the "Fathers" are the Apostles together with their successors,[13] who at some point during the formative years chose the imperial city for the place of primatial leadership.[14] Fr. John Chapman reasoned that since "Rome was the imperial city . . . St. Peter naturally made it the capital of the new worldwide Faith."[15] This reading is to be preferred over and against the idea that Rome began just as any other church, only to be later elevated by an assignment from the Church. The latter interpretation seems to be taken by prominent Orthodox scholarship today.[16] But what can be said of this elevation of Constantinople to have *equal prerogatives of honor* (ἴσα πρεσβεῖα) with Rome? The late Orthodox Peter L'Huillier stated the following in his classic study on the canons of the ancient councils with respect to these Constantinopolitan privileges mirroring Rome's:

---

[12] Leo, Letter 98, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604098.htm.

[13] See especially Westall, "The Fathers Gave Rome the Primacy," *The Dublin Review*, 108–112.

[14] On page 163–64 of his *The Roots of the Catholic Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986), Fr. Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., admits that the cities of Rome and Constantinople had their secular socio-political gravitas *as one of the* motivating factors of their ecclesiastical preeminence, but that isn't the complete story: "Certainly the positions of both Rome and Constantinople (the "new Rome") in the Empire contributed to the importance of their respective churches. But Rome's first place was not due solely to its status as the capital city: more important was its unique apostolic heritage, for Rome's was the church where both Peter and Paul labored and died."

[15] John Chapman, *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905), 84.

[16] John Meyendorff, "The Council of 381 and the Primacy of Constantinople," in *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 136; Lewis J. Patsavos, *Primacy and Conciliarity: Studies in the Primacy of the See of Constantinople and the Synodal Structure of the Orthodox Church* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1995), 7; Clark Carlton, *The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Press, 1999), 116–21; John W. Morris, *The Historic Church: An Orthodox View of Christian History* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011), 117; Philip Kariatlis, *Church as Communion: The Gift and Goal of Koinonia* (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Theology, 2011), 205.

> They [prerogatives of honor] meant to imply the responsibilities that fall to the major sees and especially to those of Old Rome and to New Rome in the universal Church. For this second see, such concern was especially applicable *to the eastern part* of the *oikoumene*. From this position followed the right analogous to the one that all the major sees enjoyed, *that is*, the control of episcopal consecrations *in neighboring areas*.[17]

Taking from this Eastern Orthodox scholar's keen observation, the "equality" that was being sought by the Byzantine bishops was the pursuit to match Rome's patriarchal jurisdiction *in the Western realm* with the newly established *Eastern realm* for Constantinople. This was jurisdiction over the metropolitans of three Eastern dioceses (Thrace, Pontus, and Asia), as well as some sort of appellate function in these regions (or to the extent of the whole East, at most). Therefore, the "equality" sought by Constantinople between itself and Rome was not to be thought of as if the church of Constantinople was seeking to be a second universal Petrine head alongside Rome. Rather, Constantinople merely sought to have an equal status *in the East* as Rome had in the West. It is of utmost importance to contrast Rome's extensive Western jurisdiction with her universal Petrine commission from Christ. To make this clearer, in Chalcedon's conciliar letter to the pope, they worded their request in the following manner:

> The long-standing custom in the holy church of God at Constantinople of ordaining metropolitans for the *Asian, Pontic, and Thracian dioceses* we have now ratified by conciliar decree.[18]

This affords a great opportunity for a few clarifications. If the jurisdiction of Constantinople was to match "equal" with Old Rome's jurisdiction, and if this jurisdiction was restricted to regional boundaries, then the *kind of jurisdiction* the twenty-eighth canon refers to when it speaks of Roman jurisdiction *was also regional*. Thus, the jurisdiction of Rome that the bishops said was due from its being the capital of the empire was *Roman's patriarchate*, which is not the same thing as Rome's universal

[17] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 275 (emphasis added).

[18] Price, *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 123.

primacy to all churches. On this reading, the kind of primacy that the twenty-eighth canon speaks of was entirely different than jurisdiction that received dogmatic treatment at the First Vatican Council, since the latter treats the universal worldwide primacy over the whole Church.

Catholics might well agree that the Roman patriarchate, with its care for the churches of the West, was organized from the prestige of the imperial city. However, the "care for all the churches" and the power of the keys that the bishops of Rome had been claiming as theirs from the *Tu es Petrus* investiture recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which is a *different kind of prerogative altogether*, rests not on the socio-political status of the Roman city but on the primacy given to St. Peter by the Lord and is inherited by his successors. Some might be surprised to hear that Rome's primacy is multi-layered, as will be discussed further below.

This takes us back to that whole notion of what Fr. Dvornik called the Church's accommodation to the political organization of the Roman Empire.[19] In a prior section, I had mentioned how this was not to be seen as wholly contrary to apostolic foundations, since the Apostles themselves had adopted the geo-political divisions of the empire as a model from which to regulate Church affairs. When the Apostles wanted to write an epistle to spread abroad within a province, they could write to the capitals of provinces, that is, the metropolis.[20] From the provincial capital, the bishop of that city would circulate that letter throughout the province. Both political and economic life was centered in the capitals, and so not only secular affairs depended upon the centralization of a capital city, but missionary efforts would take to themselves the same model for the sake of the opportunity for better and more convenient management. As Fr. Dvornik recounts:

> Naturally, this does not mean that the Apostles conferred upon the bishops residing in the capitals of the provinces any special rank superior to that of the other bishops of the same provinces. But since all of the economic, social, and political life of the provinces of the Roman Empire were centralized in the capitals, it was altogether natural that the bishops of these cities should, little by little, *come to*

[19] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 27–58; see also his *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 3–38.

[20] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 5.

> *be considered as the most important of the hierarchy of the province.*[21]

It seems clear, especially by the second and third centuries, that the *greater cities* (i.e., capitals/metropolises) of the Roman Empire situated a hierarchical arrangement within provinces, adorning the bishop of the capital with leadership responsibilities that developed into regulation by the Church's canonical policy.[22] No later than the fourth century (but the model certainly pre-dates that) "the Church officially adopted the administrative division of the empire as the basis for its own organization."[23] We also saw in a previous section how the bishop of the provincial capital, which are called metropolitan or archbishop, had also been referred to as the head of their regional churches. The famous ninth and thirty-fourth canons of the apostolic canons and the Council of Antioch (341), respectively, show this principle unmistakably.[24] Such holds well for the geo-political unit called the *province*. However, there were also existent

[21] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 30 (emphasis added).

[22] An older, but well written, description of this early organization is William Cave's *A Dissertation Concerning the Government of the Ancient Church by Bishops, Metropolitans, and Patriarchs: More Particularly Concerning the Ancient Power and Jurisdiction of the Bishops of Rome, and the Encroachments of that upon other Sees, especially the See of Constantinople*, in *Primitive Christianity*, revised by Henry Cary (Cheapside: London, 1840), 367–464; I would not agree with his conclusions on the role and description of the Roman "encroachments," but the material on the emergence of metropolitans, archbishops, and patriarchs is to be commended.

[23] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 6.

[24] Canon 9 reads: "It behooves the bishops in every province to acknowledge *the bishop who presides in the metropolis, and who has to take thought for the whole province*; because all men of business come together from every quarter to the metropolis. Wherefore it is decreed that he have precedence in rank, and that the other bishops do nothing extraordinary without him. . . . For each bishop has authority over his own parish, both to manage it with the piety which is incumbent on every one, and to make provision for the whole district which is dependent on his city; to ordain presbyters and deacons; and to settle everything with judgment. *But let him undertake nothing further without the bishop of the metropolis; neither the latter without the consent of the others*" (Synod of Antioch in Encaeniis [A.D. 341], "Canon 9," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900], rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3805.htm [emphasis mine]). Canon 34 of the Apostolic Canons reads: "The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is *first among them* and account him *as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent*; but each may do those things only which concern his own parish, and the country places which belong to it. But neither let him (who is the first) do anything without the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit" (Synod of Antioch in Encaeniis [A.D. 341], "Canon 34," *New Advent* [emphasis mine]).

major cities who stood above more than one province, leading to a sort of supra-metropolitan city, and therefore supra-metropolitan bishop, who would oversee certain affairs over a number of under-metropolitans, who then took care of provincial bishops underneath them. The sixth canon of the Council of Nicaea shows how the custom of Alexandria and Antioch follow after Rome's supra-metropolitan structure, and each came to be called *patriarchs*:[25]

> Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, *since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also*. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges.[26]

This canon recognizes the pastoral rights of Rome over the "whole of Italy," says Dvornik, and would have been an apt primordial model for the extended jurisdictions of the Alexandrian and Antiochene churches.[27] According to the historian Rufinus of Aquileia, the sixth canon of Nicaea specifies that the Alexandrian archbishop should govern Egypt while the Roman archbishop should govern "suburbicarian churches."[28] These churches made up "Rome's patriarchal authority," consisting of the "provinces of central and southern Italy and Sicily and Sardinia."[29] It has been known that Orthodox and Protestant readers have pointed to this canon in order to disprove the papacy since, as stated, the canon clearly restricts the rights and privileges of jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome to Italy. How much more limited than the Italian Peninsula can you get compared to the expanse of the whole globe? But this is to surely mistake the function of a supra-metropolitan (patriarch) with the Petrine function of the pope (i.e., care for all the churches), and thus commit to a category error.

---

[25] I.e., "ruling fathers."

[26] First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), "Canon 6," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm.

[27] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 23.

[28] Rufinus, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia* 10.6, trans. Philip R. Amidon, S.J. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 14.

[29] Henry Chadwick, "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea," in *Henry Chadwick: Selected Writings*, ed. William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 79.

The main idea here is that the nature of Rome's primatial offices vary according to type. There is the (1) primacy of the bishop of the Roman church, and this would be limited to the flock of the Roman city, just as the bishop of Alexandria had direct management of the church of Alexandria. There is then (2) the primacy of the bishop of Rome as metropolitan of the province wherein Rome is the metropolis. There is then (3) the primacy of the bishop of Rome as a supra-metropolitan or patriarch which extended over much of the Italian Peninsula, or rather more accurately described as the *ecclesiae suburbicariae*.[30] Later this (4) patriarchate would include more Western coverage, as the bishop of Rome would later be called the *patriarch of the West*. Lastly, there is (5) the primacy of the bishop of Rome as pope or successor of St. Peter, which extends to the whole world. Each of these primacies differs from one another, as they are different types and thus have different definitions.

To think, therefore, that the sixth canon's implied limitations of Roman jurisdiction is somehow a refutation against the universal papal jurisdiction is to fail to distinguish what kind of primacy Nicaea is talking about. With just a keen awareness of this distinction, the entire objection from the sixth canon against the papacy immediately dissolves. The same dissolution occurs in those objections from the third and twenty-eighth canons of Constantinople and Chalcedon, respectively, and for the same reasons. And this distinction between a limited territorial jurisdiction of Rome, on the one hand, versus a universal responsibility (of some type) is not an admission which comes only from someone who holds to the papal dogma, as even Anglican historians, who could have benefited from the collapse of said distinction, have noted.[31] By way of repetition, for the sake of clarity, we have then:[32]

---

[30] This is what Rufinus the historian describes as the coverage of the Roman supra-metropolitinate in his commentary on the sixth canon of Nicaea; see Charles Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils: From the Original Documents*, vol. 1, *To the Close of the Council of Nicaea A.D. 325*, trans. and ed. William R. Clark (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007, previously published by T&T Clark, 1894), 397–99. For a brief description on the provinces or districts adjacent to Rome, see Umberto Benigni, s.v. "Suburbicarian Dioceses," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14324a.htm.

[31] A. Theodore Wirgman, *The Constitutional Authority of Bishops in the Catholic Church* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 211–13; Kidd, "The Council of Nicaea," as quoted in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, by S. Herbert Scott (Mysterium Co., 2015), 78.

[32] This is the precise enumeration given by Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 78. The reader will want to consult further the scholarly summary of the background behind what Rufinus called the *ecclesiae suburbicuriae*, as this can perhaps be more easily summed up as just simply the patriarchate of the West. According to Hefele, the Greek canonists of the

1. Bishop of Rome;
2. Metropolitan of the Roman Province;
3. Primate of Italy;
4. Patriarch of the West;
5. Pope, primate of the universal Church.[33]

The geographical boundaries that corresponded to the second, third, and fourth kinds of primacy were most probably determined by the fact that Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire, thereby adorning the bishop of Rome with those privileges that derived from the fact that its social, economic, and political life were so centered in that city. So you have this early duality between an apostolic prerogative versus a politically accommodated prerogative, but the former has priority over the latter. What the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon was guilty of, however, was assuming that the political accommodation could account for the elevation of any church. The fifth kind of primacy, however, is not derived from this but solely from the *Tu es Petrus* investiture of Peter by Christ, and even the bishops of Chalcedon knew that, as is evidenced by their letter to Pope St. Leo itself.

With these distinctions in mind, all of a sudden the third canon of Constantinople (381) and the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon (451)

twelfth century, Zonaras and Balsamon, take the sixth canon as indicative of Rome's pastoral responsibility for the entire West (see *A History of the Christian Councils*, vol. 1, 399). Hefele counts sixty-eight provinces that Rome would have had patriarchal rights over, which far exceeds the smaller *Vicarius Urbis* (which totals a count of ten provinces) and *praefectus urbi* (which is even more restricted to Rome). Although I differ to a great extent with the conclusions of this particular author, if one wanted to explore more into modern scholarly findings about the suburbicarian dioceses in late antiquity, which offers less certainty about the precise area over which Rome would have been metropolitan or patriarch, consult the research provided by Geoffrey Dunn in "The Development of Rome as Metropolitan of Suburbicarian Italy: Innocent's Letter to the Bruttians," *Augustinianum* 51 (June 2011): 161–190. While Hefele takes the position that the entire West is within view (which he thinks is contra Rufinus), he also takes into account that Rome did not have the same kind of pastoral jurisdiction over every last bit of Western churches (see *A History of the Christian Councils*, vol. 1, 401).

[33] A. Van Hove, s.v. "hierarchy," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07322c.htm: "By virtue of his primacy, supreme authority over the whole Church belongs to the pope, who is at the same time Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Rome, and bishop of the city of Rome."

do not seem as *inherently* threatening to the universal Petrine primacy of the Roman See. Rather, just as the imperial prestige of the Roman city enlarged the privileges and honor of its bishop to extend over nearby provinces, so also for the newly enriched city of Constantinople. Even Pope Pius XII, while describing the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon in *Sempiternus Rex Christus*, found "nothing in this against the divine primacy of jurisdiction of the see of Peter."[34]

With all that said, we may still peer further into this equality of "privilege." What does scholarship have to say? Fr. Richard Price offers his perspective on this question:

> The "equal privileges" with those of Rome that the canon awards to Constantinople meant simply a *comparable authority* over subordinate metropolitan sees: they did not undermine the primacy of Rome as the first see *of Christendom*. Nor did the stress on the status enjoyed by Constantinople as one of the two imperial cities mean that the Petrine authority of the Roman see was ignored.[35]

Fr. Price understands the twenty-eighth canon to be, effectively, a bestowal of the right to the pastoral administration of the metropolitan bishops of Thrace, Asia, and Pontic,[36] a custom already in practice unbeknownst to Rome. Price notes that canons nine and seventeen at the council bestowed not a universal but only a "wide appellate jurisdiction for Constantinople."[37] Therefore, in all of the requests for primacy to the church of Constantinople, it should not be thought that it was seeking a universal primacy equal to the papal and Petrine prerogatives of the Roman See. The move to enhance the ecclesial prestige of Constantinople was clearly from the belief in that principle by which the city of New Rome gained wider administrative rights over Eastern lands.[38] In this interpretation, when Constantine had moved the capital of the empire from Rome to the Greek city of Byzantium, it was not appropriate

[34] Pope Pius XII, *Sempiternus Rex Christus* (Sept. 8, 1951), §16, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091951_sempiternus-rex-christus.html.

[35] Price, *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 71.

[36] Price, *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 68.

[37] Richard Price and Mary Whitby, eds., *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700* (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 85.

[38] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 50.

that the church of this city should retain its inferior status of being underneath the metropolitical jurisdiction of the church of Heraclea.[39]

Basing itself entirely on the principle of the church accommodating to the political organization, the primacy sought by Constantinople was not "aimed at the apostolic privilege; this primacy was part of the conception current in the Roman World of the *Order of the Cities (Ordo Urbium)* and shared in the importance which was attached to it."[40] The repeated acclamations made by the bishops at Chalcedon of St. Leo as the successor of Peter and the apostolic head of the universal Church show that they had "no idea that their doctrine of the coincidence of ecclesiastical with secular jurisdiction could be in any way contrary to the prerogative of Rome as 'the Apostolic See,' and they thought that St. Peter himself, in fixing his primacy in the capital, had given the precedent for their view that Constantinople ought now to rank in second place."[41]

Eastern Orthodox scholarship has also argued in favor of the idea that the primacy Constantinople sought in the twenty-eighth canon was a regional primacy, either exclusively to the new territories of Pontus, Asia, and Thrace, or simply the whole East *at most*.[42] This includes the well-known ninth and seventeenth canons of Chalcedon, which speak of a certain appellate jurisdiction of Constantinople. Fr. John Erickson, former dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and professor of canon law at the same, argues that the ninth and seventeenth canons of Chalcedon, which granted to Constantinople the right to hear appeals, covered "the entire eastern part of the empire."[43] Archbishop Peter L'Huillier, also a former professor of canon law at St. Vladimir's, claims that the appellate jurisdiction of canons nine and seventeen are limited to the dioceses of Pontus, Thrace, and Asia.[44]

Further, L'Huillier quotes the Greek canonist Zonaras (twelfth

[39] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 50.

[40] Pierre Batiffol, *Catholicism and Papacy: Some Anglican and Russian Difficulties* (London: Sands & Co., 1925), 120.

[41] Chapman, *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims*, 87.

[42] Canon 28 was interpreted by Photius as equipping Constantinople with the highest authority in the East such that all ecclesiastical questions should be resolved at the court of Constantinople for their adjudication and final decision; see Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization See through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 137.

[43] Fr. John Erickson, "Chalcedon Canon 28: Its Continuing Significance For Discussion of Primacy in the Church," St. Vladimir's Orthodoxy Theological Seminary, 8n10, https://orthodoxsynaxis.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/erickson-chalcedon-canon-28.pdf.

[44] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 229–36.

century) who argued in his own commentary on the seventeenth canon of Chalcedon that the patriarchate of Constantinople gives a bishop a right to judge only the metropolitans under his authority *but not those outside his region.*[45] This is followed by the thinkers of medieval Byzantium as well. A special and learned representative of the Greeks, the famous Nicetas (1136), archbishop of Nicomedia, also claimed that the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon gave Constantinople the right to "rule all the churches of Asia, Thrace, and Pontus, and should both hear and decide *their* ecclesiastical cases by its own authority."[46] Likewise, the Greek canonist Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, who authored the much treasured Pedalion (Orthodox canon law), argues that the ninth and seventeenth canons gave Constantinople the right to hear appeals from those underneath her own jurisdiction and even stressed that the appellate jurisdiction of Rome was restricted to the West.[47] It is not difficult, therefore, to see how the twenty-eighth canon was not inherently contra-papacy. The Orthodox canon-scholar Archbishop Peter L'Huillier also agrees with Fr. Richard Price that the "equality" of privileges was simply a regional match between West and East, and that "*the fathers of Chalcedon had no intention of minimizing the importance of this apostolicity, as their letter to the pope showed.*"[48]

Why, then, did St. Leo oppose the canon? Quite simply, he thought elevating Constantinople to the level of an Apostolic See violated the sixth canon of Nicaea, which established the fixed order in the hierarchy or taxis of sees beginning with Rome, Alexandria, and then Antioch. To go against this order was to fight against the Holy Spirit, since St. Leo held the canons of that council to have been uttered by the Spirit. Also, the original three Primates enumerated at the sixth canon of Nicaea (325) were built out of the apostolic efforts of St. Peter. If Old Rome was

[45] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 254.

[46] Ambrose Cristie and Carol Neil, eds., *Anselm of Havelberg, Anticimenon: On the Unity of the Faith and the Controversies with the Greeks*, trans. Ambrose Cristie, OPraem, and Carol Neel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 170.

[47] Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, *The Rudder*, translated D. Cummings (Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), 253–55. See also "St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite on Constantinople's Right to Hear Appeals," *Orthodox Synaxis* (website), Jan. 14, 2019, https://orthodoxsynaxis.org/2019/01/14/st-nicodemus-the-hagiorite-on-constantinoples-right-to-hear-appeals/.

[48] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 282; see also comments by Richard Price on the thirty-sixth canon of the Quinisext Council (Trullo) in *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 117, which reiterates the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon.

decided upon to be the primatial see during the apostolic era, it is quite possible there was a mixture of divine and secular aspects to its original primacy, but converting Constantinople to a primatial see was *purely* on secular principles.

St. Leo writes: "For no one may venture upon anything in opposition to the *enactments of the Fathers' canons* which many long years ago in the city of Nicaea were founded upon the *decrees of the Spirit*, so that anyone who wishes to pass any different decree injures himself rather than impairs them."[49] When the council, "yielding to the head,"[50] requested Rome's approval, St. Leo responded by annulling the canon by appealing to "Peter's authority."[51] The bishop of Constantinople himself described how the canon would stand or fall based upon the decision of the pope: "This decree has been transmitted to your sacredness by the holy council and by us in order to receive from you *approval and confirmation*. We beg you to do this, O most holy one."[52] When St. Anatolius learned that the canon had displeased the pope, he wrote another letter with these words: "Let your holiness be sure that there was no fault in me. . . . It was the most reverend clergy of the church of Constantinople who were eager about it. . . . *Even so the whole force and confirmation of the acts was reserved for the authority of your blessedness.*"[53] If the authority of St. Peter's successor decides the "whole force" of these decrees, then what we have here is an authority which binds the council itself, and apostolic principles won the day, at least from the standpoint of the Apostolic See.

Ever since St. Leo had annulled canon 28, the popes of Rome did not officially recognize Constantinople as the second see of Christendom, and even Eastern canon law did not endorse this canon in their official compilations. There were tacit acceptances by the popes beginning in the sixth century,[54] an indirect, though official, acceptance in the ninth

[49] Leo, Letter 105, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604105.htm (emphasis mine).

[50] Leo, Letter 98, *New Advent*.

[51] Leo, Letter 105, *New Advent*

[52] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 141 (emphasis added).

[53] Pope Leo, Epistle 132, in *PL* 54.1084, as quoted *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 330 (emphasis mine).

[54] Church historian Philippe Blaudeau (late antiquity) describes how under the Pontificate of St. Hormisdas, Rome was beginning to see a function for Constantinople as almost a vicariate primate through which to oversee Eastern affairs; see Philippe Blaudeau, "Between Petrine Ideology and Realpolitik," in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, eds. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford University Press, 2012), 383–84.

century (Constantinople, 869), and finally a fully explicit acceptance in the thirteenth century (Lateran, 1215).[55] But even then, the preface of the canon describes the terms of Roman primacy in unmistakable clarity:

> Renewing the ancient privileges of the patriarchal sees, we decree, with the approval of this sacred universal synod, that after the Roman church, which through the *Lord's disposition* has a primacy of *ordinary power over all other churches* inasmuch as it is the mother and mistress of all Christ's faithful, the *church of Constantinople shall have the first place*, the church of Alexandria the second place, the church of Antioch the third place, and the church of Jerusalem the fourth place, each maintaining its own rank.[56]

Going back to Chalcedon (451), the Emperor St. Marcian urged St. Anatolius to submit to St. Leo's annulment, which caused the letter cited above with his exclamation of the pope's authority to veto the canons, and the emperor himself also wrote a letter confirming his acceptance of the pope's annulment:

> Of course in this Your Holiness has acted with the great wisdom *befitting the Bishop of the apostolic see*, that is, in *guarding the ecclesiastical canons* you have not suffered any innovations in the old rules and customs which have been observed to this day inviolate.[57]

Thus, in the years following Chalcedon, you have the pope, the bishop of Constantinople, and the Byzantine emperor all committed to the nullification of the twenty-eighth canon. That is hugely significant. Later in the fifth century, there is a recounting of this submission of both emperor and patriarch to the authority of the pope's annulment in a famous document written by Pope St. Gelasius (492–496) entitled the *Bond of Anathema*. In this tract, St. Gelasius spoke to the question of

---

[55] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 54. Interestingly enough, Pope Hadrian I in his epistles read at the Council of Nicaea II (787) implies that the authority of Rome was of such to alter the order of sees, contrary to St. Leo.

[56] Fourth Lateran Council: 1215, "The Dignity of the Patriarchal Sees," *Papal Encyclicals Online*, §5, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm.

[57] Mansi 6., Epist. 110, col. 216, as quoted in *The Idea of Apostolicity*, by Dvornik, 101n192.

whether the twenty-eighth canon at Chalcedon has the legal support of Rome. He writes:

> But other things, those which were done or simply talked about through foolish presumption, *things which the apostolic see in no way ordered*, which were clearly and speedily rejected by the legates of the apostolic see, which the apostolic see, even with the emperor Marcian asking for them, in no way approved, which the bishop of Constantinople at the time, Anatolius, *claimed not to have sought and did not deny was in the power of the bishop of the apostolic see*; in sum, as we said, that which the apostolic see has not accepted, because it was shown to be contradictory to the privileges of the universal Church, can in no way be accepted.[58]

Here St. Gelasius recognized that the Council of Chalcedon was only permitted to ratify what the pope of Rome allowed it to, and that the canons were dependent, as St. Anatolius himself admitted, under the authority of Rome. According to Fr. Dvornik, because of the pope's annulment, the twenty-eighth canon did not make it into the official lists of ecclesial canons.[59] It shows up in the sixth century in the Syntagma of

[58] Thiel, ed., *Epistolae Romanorum*, t.1., 557–59, as quoted in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Robert B. Eno, SS (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1984), 167 (emphasis added).

[59] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 54. Interestingly enough, the nomocanon (synagoge of fifty titles) of St. John Scholasticus (503–77), patriarch of Constantinople, did not include the twenty-eighth canon. However, by the ninth century, St. Methodius is understood to have translated the Greek nomocanon of St. Scholasticus into the Slavic language; see Francis Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs: SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 176. According to French historian Nicholas Brian-Chaninov, St. Methodius included a commentary in his translation of the above nomocanon on the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon, which denies that Rome received the primacy because it was the capital of the empire, but rather "this primacy had its origin from on high, by Divine grace. Because of the intensity of his faith, Peter, the first of the Apostles, was addressed in these words by our Lord Jesus Christ himself: 'Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep,' That is why in hierarchical order Rome holds the pre-eminent place and is the first see. That is why the privileges of old Rome are eternally immovable, and that is the view of all the Churches" (as cited by Brian-Chaninov in *The Russian Church* (London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne Ltd., 1931), 46–47. Brian-Chaninov takes from the manuscript discoveries of a certain Russian scholar, A. Pavlov, who discovered the Slavonic text of St. Scholasticus's nomocanon translated from the Greek. Supposedly, this Slavic translation, including the commentary, was spread around the Slavic lands up until the thirteenth century; see Brian-Chaninov, *The Russian Church*, 46–47. However, Fr. Dvornik finds

14 Titles[60] but never with Rome's approval. And yet, despite all of this, it is remarkable to note that the East would continue moving forward with Constantinople as the second see above the other Eastern patriarchs, and it would take Rome several more centuries before this became a legal reality, *of both head and members.*[61] While it is true that the East's continued recognition of Constantinople as the second see is an example of a violation of both papal mandate and conciliar acceptance, since the twenty-eighth canon had neither the support of the pope or any other council, it remains to be clear evidence that for many Eastern bishops, the commanding orders of the Apostolic See were negligible. Regardless of whether the East was wrong to disobey Rome's order from time to time, no historian can deny this fact.

As this portion comes to a close, it become increasingly clear how two divergent ecclesiological ideologies were continuing to foment and cause separations from East and West, particularly regarding how the primacy of Old Rome was to be understood. For Pope St. Leo, the Council of Chalcedon itself confirmed his own words: "*Through the most blessed Peter,* the chief of the Apostles, the holy Roman Church holds the *principate over all the churches of the whole world.*"[62] That is, the universal ministry of Rome was not given by the Fathers because of its being the capital of the empire, but rather it came from Christ in St. Peter. All judgments of the Church, as the Innocentian principle goes, must not be considered final until they reach the authoritative review of St. Peter's See. Even the Emperor St. Marcian, in his third edict mandating adherence to the decrees of Chalcedon, wrote that the council had explored the faith "*on the authority of the most blessed Leo* bishop of the eternal city of Rome."[63] As soon as the second millennium came around, many in the East forgot about this detail and began to associate the Roman primacy only with

textual reasons to deny Methodian authorship and attributes it to another after the death of St. Methodius; see Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs*, 178. At the very least, it was well known by the ninth century and following that even Easterners understood that the twenty-eighth canon could not be completely right if it were intending to give an original explanation for Rome's universal primacy.

[60] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 54; this book of canon law was made at the end of the sixth century, approximately 580; for a quick summary, see Spyros Troianos, "Byzantine Canon Law to 1100," in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 120.

[61] It was the law of the Church, as Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen noted as early as the fifth century, that no council could enact decrees contrary to the bishop of Rome.

[62] Leo, Epistle 65, quoted in *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 304n3 (emphasis added).

[63] Price, *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 132 (emphasis added).

its secular origins, a primacy which, by then, was thought to belong to Constantinople exclusively in light of the schism.

Above is a good deal of detail on the original impetus behind the elevation of Constantinople to second place, but there was still more in the future to be held in that Byzantine-seed of imperialization. During the apex of the Middle Ages, Anna Comnena, daughter of Emperor Alexios I Comnena, became famous for stating in her *Alexiad* that when Constantine moved the imperial capital from Old Rome to Constantinople, the latter had transferred to it all the prerogatives of primacy[64] and interpreted this primacy as a subordination "of all the dioceses of the universe" to the patriarch of Constantinople.[65] The famous Byzantine canonist Zonaras had the opposite to say, namely, that Constantinople was elevated but still subordinated to Rome.[66] Even so, there were moments where an equality was asserted between the patriarchs of Constantinople and those of Elder Rome.[67] Constantinople's claim to primacy would reach that of a universal jurisdiction up to and beyond the fall of the Roman Empire into the Ottoman Era.[68] The status of the patriarchate of Constantinople continues to be a matter of canonical dispute to this very day, and we can only hope to resolve it through the convocation of an ecumenical council akin to the first seven of the first millennium.

[64] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 283–84.
[65] L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 284.
[66] Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, 132–33.
[67] Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, 137.
[68] Meyendorff, Catholicity and the Church, 137.

*Chapter Fourteen*

# The Papacy and the Acacian Schism (484–519)

If the minor oppositions that were shown against papal authority by Nestorius, Dioscorus, Eutyches, and the bishops of Egypt, Illyricum, and Palestine were not enough to illustrate a divergence of ecclesiology and epistemology during these early centuries, then certainly the resistance that the same bishops gave toward the ecumenical councils would make it undeniable. Nestorius never did come around to recognizing the Council of Ephesus (431), nor did the Miaphysites (those who stressed the unity of Christ) come around to observing the Council of Chalcedon (451). In fact, following the close of the latter council under Emperor St. Marcian, there was even more division and dissension over the precise theological issues than there had been before. It cannot be denied that, for many bishops, papal authority could only be sustained if it proved itself to be in conformity with the truth, and the truth *as they themselves understood it.*

The same for ecumenical councils. Both papal decrees and ecumenical councils were not thought by literally everyone to be, *a priori*, automatically correct and deserving of obedience. For many, the ultimate criterion of the truth was simply what they recognize as true. What this section will demonstrate is that while this may be the case for many, the Apostolic See did understand herself to be the recipient of certain

promises of divine protection against error by the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. By her judgment and authority, the Church's integrity and strength were sustained. This thought process was shouted from the rooftops if not under the primitive popes, certainly under their successors up unto the early sixth century, and these claims to supreme authority and doctrinal infallibility were never taken back and were publicized as defining terms of communion. Admittedly, this differs from many of the voices in the East, and it only confirms what we observed in the beginning portion of the book about the two divergent ecclesiological principles, perhaps even more,[1] which continue to manifest, certainly causing ongoing tension.[2] As the historian W. H. C. Frend observed, these were "two separate theories of Church government" which "have still not been harmonized."[3]

As we mentioned in a prior section, the episcopates of Egypt, Syria, Armenia, Palestine, Constantinople, and even Illyricum were divided over the Council of Chalcedon, with its largest rejection occurring in Alexandria. With enough anti-Chalcedonian influence, the See of Antioch also gets lumped into the Chalcedonian repudiation. The situation became so difficult that the next emperor, Leo I, sought another council in order to ease the tension created by the supporters of Chalcedon and its repudiators (Miaphysites). For the latter, Chalcedon had denied the authentic Christology of St. Cyril of Alexandria, which was made dogmatic at the Council of Ephesus (431) and had been carried on in the tradition of St. Cyril's letters. In reaction to the emperor's proposal

[1] I personally hesitate to agree that the oft-mentioned "two divergent ecclesiologies" can explain the evidence exhaustively. There were certainly voices who represented the papal perspective, but even within that, there are variants. Those voices in support of councils might at other times support their own private interpretation of what the Fathers meant in opposition to councils. It is quite difficult to nail down what each person thought, and we almost inevitably paint with an extremely broad brush even if it seems the thinnest in our collection.

[2] For a review of events following Chalcedon, see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 194–206; Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 314–41; George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 47–56; John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 165–206; Aiden Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, second edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 208–13; William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 134–49.

[3] W. H. C. Frend, "The Origins of the Papacy," in *The Papacy*, eds. Paul Johnson and Michael Walsh (London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997), 41.

for a new council, Pope St. Leo protested vehemently against it and was satisfied to let the hammer of condemnation fall on those who continued to ignore Chalcedon. Before moving into the meat of the papacy and the Acacian schism, a preliminary review of how Chalcedon was received in the East should be given.

In Palestine, resistance was born quickly but eventually died down. In Antioch, those hostile to Chalcedon murdered the Chalcedonian patriarch Stephen "in one of his own churches by the ghastly method of piercing him 'through and through' with reed pens,"[4] and proceeded to install a successor who agreed with their cause. In Alexandria, the Chalcedonian successor to Dioscorus, St. Proterius, was likewise murdered[5] and replaced with one holding their persuasion. Late Roman historian Edward Gibbon described that St. Proterius was killed in the baptistery itself, and "his mangled corpse was delivered to the flames, and his ashes to the wind."[6] Often, the opposing factions within these patriarchates continued to elect a patriarch of their own persuasion, causing further schism within. As a result, there were two ecclesial bodies created within Antioch and Alexandria.

The theological debate was vastly complex, and far too difficult to simplify in a work like this, but one thing becomes clear in all of this: the subject of ordinary and infallible authority in the doctrine of the Church was hotly contested, and even this late into Church history, the main stage is merely a testing ground for a variety of theories. Some of these theories proved unworkable, and others survived. Thankfully, during the inception of this crisis in the East, the See of Constantinople started off strongly pro-Chalcedonian in her patriarch Acacius (472–489). Even with the Church of the imperial city being in favor of orthodoxy, however, the large upheaval throughout the East mandated that the emperor step in, once again, and use everything at his disposal for the peace of the churches. Such was a repetitive motif in Christian Byzantium.

Ever since the Hellenistic conception of the emperor as guardian of religion became deeply ingrained in the Church, the emperors took the problem of doctrinal disunity as their own to solve. As we saw, this could be a good or bad thing. It is certainly a troublesome situation when there

[4] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 137.

[5] S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 210.

[6] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 5.235, as quoted in *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years*, by Philip Jenkins (New York: HarperOne, 2011), xii.

is not only doctrinal disunity but also imperial disunity between two rival claimants to the throne. During the years 475–477, there had been two claimants to the imperial throne, Basiliscus and Zeno. Under the former, the solution for the churches was to conciliate the Miaphysites of Egypt and other places through an outward repudiation of St. Leo's Tome and the Council of Chalcedon altogether in one fell swoop. Under Zeno, a more nuanced solution was taken in order to offer both Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians a satisfying compromise. The policies of both men proved to be unacceptable to the Apostolic See, and so what we had here was a testing ground of what would happen when and if Rome were to lock horns with a dissenting East.

After one year of Zeno's reign, Basiliscus was able to seize power and begin rolling out his own policy to bring peace to the churches. The first move was his publication of an encyclical, given to the famous anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, Timothy (surname "the Cat"), announcing that orthodoxy was sufficiently laid down by the first two universal councils (Nicaea and Ephesus I), along with the Robber Council of Ephesus 449,[7] while also purposefully *excluding* St. Leo's Tome and the Council of Chalcedon. Those who held to the latter were threatened with exile or other penalties.[8] Timothy then boldly promoted this new program.

Amazingly, approximately five hundred to seven hundred bishops signed on to the *Basiliscan Encyclical*.[9] If this does not show that there were differences of opinion in the East on the subject of supreme ecclesial authority, there simply isn't anything else to show it. Even Patriarch Anastasius, successor to St. Juvenal of Jerusalem, who himself was accused by the pope of supporting Eutyches at Ephesus (449),[10] came out and signed this encyclical.[11] The Jerusalemite situation, therefore, had also become tainted with this ploy against the Chalcedon. According to Fr. John Meyendorff, this tragic story "showed that the entire episcopate of the East was practically made up of either straight opponents of Chalcedon or at least of people called the 'Hesitants' (Διαακριτνόμενοι), who could easily approve Chalcedon under Leo and reject it under Basiliscus."[12] Or, as Jalland notes, it "was indicative of the untrustworthiness of the eastern

[7] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 315.
[8] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 196.
[9] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 200.
[10] He rectified his situation at Chalcedon (451).
[11] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 196.
[12] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 196.

episcopate that when confronted with this declaration of the imperial paradosis most of the five hundred who now assented to the edict *had only a few years previous expressed precisely the opposite opinion.*"[13] As can be expected, during the process of this Eastern collapse, some Archimandrites in Constantinople appealed to Pope St. Simplicius (468–483) for intervening help. The pope then wrote to the usurping Basiliscus with the typical Roman message:

> Those genuine and clear [truths] which flow from the very pure fountains of the Scriptures cannot be disturbed by any arguments of misty subtlety. For this same norm of apostolic doctrine *endures in the successors of him upon whom the Lord imposed the care of the whole sheepfold,* whom [He promised] He would *not fail even to the end of the world,* against whom He promised that the gates of hell would never prevail, *by whose judgment* He testified that what was bound on earth could not be loosed in heaven.[14]

Acacius had opposed Basiliscus, and when Emperor Zeno was able to regain power over his rival, the flagrant condemnation of Chalcedon was reversed. Only Zeno's solution was also rigged with some limitations. Instead of promoting a program of unity between the Miaphysites and the Chalcedonians, Zeno published a document known as the *Henotikon* (act of union) in 482, which did not reject the decrees of Chalcedon *but also ignored it as a standard of orthodoxy that the Church would have to submit to.* It certainly omitted the Tome of St. Leo. Acacius went along with this,[15] and this earned him a poor reputation over at the chancery of the Roman church. Two important figures also went along with it: Peter Mongus, patriarch of Alexandria, and Peter the Fuller, patriarch of Antioch. Both of their ascensions into office were suspect but nevertheless deemed valid.[16] This left the Eastern patriarchs signing off on this *Henotikon* that omitted Chalcedon and St. Leo's Tome as defining

[13] Jalland, *Church and Papacy,* 315 (emphasis added).

[14] Simplicius, *Cuperem Quidem,* Mansi 7.975, in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma,* eds. H. Denzinger and K. Rahner, trans. R. J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 64 (emphasis added).

[15] Although Acacius never lost his own commitment to Chalcedon (e.g., the twenty-eighth canon), he saw the *Henotikon* as a workable statement to bring into communion those who couldn't accept Chalcedon.

[16] The lawful holder of the Antiochene patriarchate was a certain Calendion, who refused to abide by the *Henotikon* and was later *sent into exile.* Also, Peter Mongus was preceded by

criterion of orthodoxy, although many of those who signed it were in support of the council. Even if Chalcedon was not formally and fully repudiated, the ambiguity with which the council was treated creates a sort of parallel to the way Nicaea (325) was relativized by the semi-Arians of the mid-fourth century. News of this was brought to Rome through John Talaia in the form of an appeal since he wanted justice for, as a result of being Chalcedonian, "losing" his episcopal enthronement in Alexandra.

Although originally consulting with Pope St. Simplicius, it fell to his successor, St. Felix III, to attempt negotiations with the East. However, when this pope saw that the Council of Chalcedon was omitted from their new *Henotikon*, and that St. Leo's Tome was not made a clear standard, he took aim squarely at Acacius, especially since the latter chose not to appear before the pope's court after being summoned.[17] An initial letter from Felix III to the patriarch Acacius includes:

> Brother, do not let us despair that the word of our Saviour will be true; He promised that He would never be wanting to His Church to the end of the world; that it should never be overcome by the gates of hell; that all which was bound on earth by sentence of apostolic doctrine should not be loosed in heaven. Nor let us think that either the *judgment of Peter* or the *authority of the universal Church*, by whatever dangers it be surrounded, *will ever lose the weight of its force*.[18]

In the above, St. Felix III makes it clear that the *Henotikon* would effectively remove binding character of Chalcedon,[19] but since the latter is fortified by the promises of Christ to St. Peter, neither the Tome of St. Leo nor the council should ever be called into question, meaning, they are irreformable.

---

John Talaia, who was lawfully elected as patriarch of Alexandria, but it was not recognized regardless; see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 201–03.

[17] Thomas William Allies, *The Holy See and the Wandering of the Nations: From St. Leo to St. Gregory I* (London: Burns & Oates, 1888), 71.

[18] Mansi 7.1030, quoted in *The Holy See and the Wandering of the Nations*, by Allies, 73–74 (emphasis added). The indefectibility of the Church is argued on the same line as the judgment of St. Peter, obviously the doctrine of the Apostolic See in the eyes of St. Felix II.

[19] Whether the substantial doctrine of the Zeno's *Henotikon* is harmonious with Chalcedon is a different question, but it would appear as though the popes of Rome assumed that by taking Chalcedon off the shelf of ecumenical councils, its doctrine was thereby repudiated.

There was also implied in here the doctrine of papal infallibility. Notice the reference to "judgment of Peter" is parallel to the authority of an ecumenical council. This indicates he was not working with a Roman flattery of the papal office. He means there is a real organ in the Church that exhibits the judgment of St. Peter, otherwise the other descriptions of the Church's infallibility, that of the "universal Church," would also have to be taken as hyperbolic flattery, which is absurd.[20] When it became clear that Acacius was not going to repudiate the *Henotikon*, the pope released a sentence of excommunication and deposition, as the historian Evagrius (536–594) reports,[21] which stated the following:

> Since Acacius, after being warned by us a second time, has not ceased to show contempt for the beneficial canons (*statutorum salu brium*), and supported that I in the person of my (legates) ought to be imprisoned, *by a judgment pronounced from heaven God has banished him from the episcopate*. Wherefore if *any* bishop, clerk, monk, or layman shall have communion with him after this sentence, *let him be anathema*, as the Holy Ghost declares. . . . Know that thou art thrust forth from the episcopate, *as well as from Catholic communion and the number of the faithful*, condemned by the judgment of the Holy Ghost and *by our apostolic authority*, and never at any time to be loosed from the bonds of anathema.[22]

---

[20] Some might suggest that Pope St. Felix III simply means by "judgement of Peter," the role of the pope in confirming the decrees of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, and thus this need not be a reference to the kind of papal infallibility espoused by *Pastor Aeternus* of the First Vatican Council but can be reconciled with a more conciliar view where the judgment of Peter is needed to confirm the decrees of the episcopate when gathered into a synod. This is not implausible, but this would still attribute such a special function to the Roman church that it sufficiently differentiates from the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox on the subject of synods and their ratification. The only Church existing today that teaches anything remotely similar to what Felix III is saying here is the Catholic Church, which Felix himself said would last until the end of time. That fact, overall, may serve to move the needle toward what Felix meant by his reference to the judgment of Peter.

[21] Evagrius Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* 3.18, trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 128.

[22] Jaffe-Kaltenbrunner (Ewald), *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 600, in *Church and Papacy*, by Jalland, 318–19; This here is an example of the pope exercising universal jurisdiction since his excommunication is attempting to bind all Christians everywhere. One of his successors, St. Gelasius (492–496), would attempt to show that this kind of disciplinary exclusion from a heretic who is supposedly guilty of repudiating a council already received by the universal

This decree was then sent to Constantinople, and monks loyal to Chalcedon pinned it on the vestments of Acacius during the Divine Liturgy.[23] The latter boldly removed the pope's name from the diptychs of Constantinople, and this commenced the dreadful Acacian Schism (484–519).

This moment also affords the opportunity to examine the all-important question: was this move on the part of Pope St. Felix III an implication of his belief that the bishop of Rome had universal and immediate jurisdiction over the whole Church? Edward Denny, the Anglican critic of papalism, believed that St. Felix III went way outside of his boundary.[24] Besides him, the fellow Anglican F. W. Puller comments on the sentence of the pope against Acacius in light of what he thinks is the extremity of patriarchal rights:

> He certainly had the right to separate Acacius from the communion of the Roman Church; and inasmuch as his sentence was sanctioned by the Roman synod, it would avail to cut Acacius off from the communion of the suburbicarian churches [Roman Patriarchate] generally.[25]

Puller understood that the bishop of Rome himself would only have the power to withdraw Acacius from the communion of the regional Roman church. Likewise, a Roman synod representing the Roman patriarchate has the power to remove Acacius from the communion of said patriarchate. However, Puller refused to allow that a Roman synod could make a universal excommunication, otherwise the Roman synod would be possessed of an immediate and universal jurisdiction over all the churches. In Puller's mind, therefore, St. Felix III, in claiming the Roman judgment here, far transgressed the rights of a patriarchal synod, and was, in effect, attempting to exercise universal jurisdiction:

---

Church can be enacted by any bishop, but it should be recalled that the same pope also said that when the bishop of Rome binds, that bind itself carries universal superiority regardless.

[23] John Moorhead, *The Popes and the Church of Rome in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2015), 37–38; J. N. D. Kelly, "Felix III (II)," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 44.

[24] Edward Denny, *Papalism: A Treatise on the Claims of the Papacy as Set Forth in the Encyclical Satis Cognitum* (London: Rivingtons, 1912), 469–70, 546.

[25] F. W. Puller, *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 379 (emphasis added).

> The synod of the suburbicarian bishops was wholly incompetent to do anything more than separate Acacius from the particular communion of their churches. *His episcopal office and his membership in the Catholic Church was not subject to their jurisdiction.*[26]

That leads to another important question: did Pope St. Felix III simply attempt to remove Acacius from the communion of the Roman synod only? Puller writes:

> He acted throughout as if he was the possessor of a universal jurisdiction inherited from S. Peter. . . . He claimed the right to depose Acacius from his bishopric and to cut him off *from the number of the faithful*, on the ground that he, as Roman Pontiff, was the head of all the churches, having the care of all. And these rights are traced up ultimately to our Lord's words to S. Peter.[27]

The Orthodox critic of the papacy, Fr. Vladimir Guettée, agreed with the Anglican scholars above in accusing St. Felix III with attempting to exercise jurisdiction outside of his lawful boundary. In reaction to the sentence of excommunication from the pope, Fr. Guettée stated:

> This sentence pronounced against Acacius was null and anti-canonical, since it was rendered outside of the district where the accused resided, and without the participation of the Eastern bishops. . . . The Bishop of Rome showed himself disposed to *exaggerate his prerogatives.*[28]

At least some of the Eastern bishops reflect Puller's ideas in that they rejected the sentence of the Roman synod to depose the bishop of Constantinople without the due process of an ecumenical council. Right here is one proof that the East, at least a portion thereof, rejected the

[26] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 380 (emphasis added). Puller admits in some extraordinary circumstances, there might be a competency obtained in light of an emergency; see 381.

[27] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 381–82 (emphasis added).

[28] Fr. Vladimir Guettée, DD, *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867), 196–97 (emphasis added).

infallibility and direct jurisdiction of the pope over the East.[29] However, the "Chalcedonian monks were ecstatic, nailing up a copy of the anathema in public."[30] Rome, of course, had her response to these objections. Symonds essentially agrees with Denny and Puller, stating that the pope "called Acacius to answer to his charges in Rome, and when the patriarch disdained to appear, pronounced sentence against him."[31]

We certainly know that Eastern prelates were not accepting of this since both Fravita and Euphemius, both Chalcedonian patriarchs of Constantinople, refused to abide by Rome's demand to condemn Acacius.[32] Fr. Robert Eno is certainly right to pinpoint the "motivation for this refusal" on the "question of whether the bishop of Rome by himself, without a council, or at least, without the agreement of the patriarchs, had the authority to depose the patriarch of Constantinople."[33] Fr. John Meyendorff likewise notes that the Eastern prelates did not recognize Acacius's condemnation since he "had never been formally condemned for heresy, but only *unilaterally deposed by Rome*."[34] In the future, under the pontificate of Pope St. Gelasius (492–496), it became clearly recognized that Rome was accused, even if wrongly, of deposing and excommunicating Acacius "by one person."[35] It might be pointed out by some, however, that Pope St. Gelasius seemed to suggest that Felix's judgment against Acacius was not grounded in any immediate jurisdiction but based on the authority of Chalcedon, a prerogative in the hands of every bishop, let alone any primate. They can appeal to the following in St. Gelasius:

> Yes, does he not realise that Acacius was condemned according to the formula of the *synod* of Chalcedon? . . . By that formula particularly it is agreed that the instigators of

[29] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 181.

[30] Peter Crawford, *Roman Emperor Zeno: The Perils of Power Politics in Fifth-century Constantinople* (Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2019), 174.

[31] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 154.

[32] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 181.

[33] Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1990), 120.

[34] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 162 (emphasis added).

[35] St. Gelasius, Letter 10.4, in *Letters of Gelasius I (492–496): Micro-Manager and Pastor of the Church of Rome*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2014), 100, quoting from Thiel, ed., *Epistulae Romanorum*.

> Acacius' error were condemned by a *majority vote of bishops* (*sacerdotum*). . . . It is permissible not only for an apostolic leader but for *every pontiff* to separate from catholic communion whomsoever they like and whatever place they like, according to the rule of the very heresy that has previously been condemned. . . . Thus it is unavoidable that he meet impartially with the same verdict as the originator of the error, *through the agreement of the synod*, received with his followers.[36]

*Prima facie*, St. Gelasius appears to be saying that the Roman excommunication of Acacius was simply an exercise of a common prerogative of all bishops. Since Acacius was purportedly guilty of rejecting the ecumenical council of Chalcedon, he merited the condemnation of an ecumenical council. As such, each bishop need not refer to his own authority but that of the council to justify removing Acacius from communion. However, St. Gelasius had far more to say about Rome's judgment. What he said above concerning the permissibility of a bishop to remove Acacius from communion since the authority of an ecumenical council stands behind said judgment was simply speaking to what is permissible. He used this as a device to avoid blame of Felix III, but that did not mean he was defining the precise breadth of authority that Felix's sentence itself carried. St. Gelasius understood that when Rome judges a person, it comes with more authority than what is merely permitted. Just after stating that St. Felix's excommunication of Acacius rested on the authority of an ecumenical council, he followed with his second defense of the pope's sentence:

> And by this means the canons have instructed that this see is to sit in judgment on the entire church, to pass to nobody's judgment, nor ever to be judged by its judgment, and they have determined that its verdict should *never be undone*, and ordered instead that its decisions are to be followed. And in this very case Timothy of Alexandria and Peter of Antioch, Peter, Paul, John, and the rest, not just one but certainly several bearing the title of bishop, were deposed by the *sole* (*sola*) *authority* of the apostolic see.[37]

[36] St. Gelasius, Letter 10.4, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 110–11.

[37] St. Gelasius, Letter 10.4, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 111 (emphasis added).

Was he contradicting himself within the same letter? No. The point here is that St. Gelasius was saying, for the sake of argument, that Acacius was condemnable immediately because of the decision of Chalcedon as a synod. However, that does not mean that he was suggesting that his predecessor's sentence of excommunication and deposition against Acacius carried only that significance. He was simply stating that even if Acacius's condemnation by Pope St. Felix III could fall prey to their criticism of a lack of conciliar authority, that precise thing was not missing in Felix's decree. St. Gelasius held that the court of Rome could issue irreversible judgments "even without a synod,"[38] as in the cases of reversing the depositions of St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Flavian of Constantinople:

> If, therefore, those who were condemned by the synod of the East could not be condemned because that one see [Rome] alone did not consent to it, it follows that *even without a synod*, the one who was condemned through the condemnation of the same see alone *is condemned.*[39]

There you have it. A bishop can be officially condemned by the bishop of Rome even without a synod in light of its jurisdiction. According to Henry Chadwick, "Unlike a Byzantine conciliar ecclesiology Pope Gelasius (492–496) countered that St. Peter's successors at Rome needed no synods to ratify their decisions."[40] Furthermore, while St. Gelasius spoke of the permissibility of any bishop removing another bishop from communion if the latter had fallen guilty of a heretical crime over which a prior ecumenical council had passed a condemning sentence, he did not grant to each and every bishop *the right to absolve condemned bishops.* That prerogative was reserved for the Apostolic See alone. According to George Demacopoulos, St. Gelasius argued that "the ability to loose sin is the unique privilege of St. Peter (and his heirs), and therefore the Eastern bishops on their *own could not exonerate Acacius.*"[41] Thus, it is clear

---

Latin: "*Sola sedis apostolicae sunt auctoritate dejecti,*" quoting from *Epistolae Romanorum*, ed. Thiel, 344.

[38] Gelasius, Letter 1, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 83.

[39] Gelasius, Letter 1, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 83 (emphasis added).

[40] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 51.

[41] George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), 97 (emphasis added). See also Gelasius, Letter 27.4–5, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 118–19, for a clear

that when and if the Apostolic See judges, it comes with a unique and singular authority (not common to all) which is the form of a seal over which no appeal can be lodged. Therefore, while St. Gelasius says any could have removed Acacius from their communion, the specific binding force of the papal anathema upon Acacius executed by Pope St. Felix III could not be thwarted by anyone after it had been executed, unless Acacius himself repented,[42] in light of the uniqueness of the authority of the Apostolic See. As the above citation from Felix III stated, that decree of excommunication included effects over every bishop of the world. Acacius was "condemned by the judgment of the Holy Ghost and by our apostolic authority, and *never at any time* to be loosed from the bonds of anathema." This is the sort of thing that not every individual bishop can do. This requires universal and ordinary jurisdiction over every diocese. In agreement is the Anglican anti-papalist Edward Denny. He said this about the judgment of St. Felix:

> There is no doubt as to the cause being *Felix's usurpation* of authority, which the Easterns were *compelled to resist* in defence of the position which the East had always taken in preservation of the Catholic constitution of the Church.[43]

Denny understands the papal deposition of Acacius was a usurpation of authority that did not belong to the bishop of Rome. On Rome's requirement to remove Acacius from the diptychs in the divine liturgy, such would be, according to Denny, impossible for the Eastern Churchmen since "to have done so of his own free will *would have been to admit the claims of the Roman Bishop to depose an Eastern patriarch*. . . . [T]he East preferred to remain out of communion with, and under the anathema of, Rome sooner than compromise."[44] A remarkable admission here by the late English critic. To capitulate in removing Acacius's name from the diptychs, Denny argues, would be to admit the papal claims of universal jurisdiction. The implication here is quite telling. It would mean that the whole Chalcedonian East, that which *en masse* is the ecclesial

argument from Pope St. Gelasius on the unique and supreme judgment of the Apostolic See over all others.

[42] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 83–109; see p. 87 where St. Gelasius says that Acacius had no right to loosen the condemnation of Peter Mongus, since the latter had been rejected by Rome. This implies St. Gelasius understood the absolution of these men to be properly adjudicated and dispensed by the court of the Apostolic See.

[43] Denny, *Papalism*, 470.

[44] Denny, *Papalism*, 470.

predecessor of today's Eastern Orthodox Church, did precisely that in its acceptance of the Formula of St. Hormisdas in 519. It would seem to be a logical inference that today's Orthodox Church had at least at one time, admitted the papal claims.[45]

One year after Pope St. Felix III issued his first condemnation of Acacius, he convened a Roman synod of Italian bishops in 485, and its synodal decree included the following in a letter which was sent to the monks and clergy of Constantinople:

> Whenever in Italy the priests of the Lord gather on account of ecclesiastical affairs, especially matters of faith, the custom is observed that the successor of the bishops of the Apostolic See determines everything [*cuncta constituat*] in the person of all the priests of all Italy, according to his authorized solicitude for all the Churches, *for he is the head of all*: since the Lord said to blessed Peter the Apostle: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Pursuant to this saying, three-hundred and eighteen saintly Fathers assembled in Nicaea *deferred confirmation of the proceedings and [final] authority to the holy Roman Church*; to this day, with the help of Christ's grace, all his successors have kept both [prerogatives]. Therefore, what pleased the holy Synod in the presence of Blessed Peter the Apostle (as we said) through the sure protector of the Church, and what the most blessed man Felix too, our Head, Pope, and Archbishop *judged, is held conjointly among his subjects.*[46]

[45] Denny recognizes that the East capitulated to this (see *Papalism*, 470–71) but attributes it to the Imperial power that the popes were able to garner for their own end of papal supremacy. Of course, Denny is inserting his own prejudice against the concept of papal authority and attempts to apologize for the Byzantines by excusing their capitulation to imperial influence. It should be known that it was Emperor Justinian who bore the greatest responsibility of this Byzantine acceptance of the Roman demand, and this emperor is a venerated saint in today's Orthodox Church. If the Orthodox are going to invest any reliance on Denny's argument here, they would be exchanging the works of a saint for those of a modern Protestant critic who accuses that saint of papalism.

[46] *Collectio Avellana* 1.70, in *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics*, book 1, part 1, by Matthias Scheeben (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2019), 344n15 (emphasis added). Shorter translation to compare in *The Development of the Papacy*, by H. Burn-Murdoch (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), 261. Notice how the citation from Scheeben shows that the Italian bishops recognized that Rome's synodal activity was not merely in the name of the synodal constitution but from the *Tu es Petrus* investiture from Christ directly to St. Peter as

According to the late and eminent Catholic theologian, Fr. Matthias Joseph Scheeben, the Easterners had complained that the deposition and excommunication of Acacius had been done without a council (*synodaliter*). The above was a response which says that the Italian bishops did gather in council, even if the pope's name alone was on the letter dispatched to East.[47] For that reason, the Byzantines may have gotten the impression that the pope issued his excommunication of Acacius all by his single self. However, the synodal machinery of Acacius's condemnation in Rome does not downplay the universality or immediacy of papal jurisdiction, for as Puller noted, a patriarch and his synod could *only* enforce decrees for the boundary that encloses his particular patriarchate but could not bind outside of it until an ecumenical council was convened. But in the case of the Roman Synod of 484, it possessed the same authority of an ecumenical council because of its accreditation of the pope's own universal jurisdiction, which was precisely the claim of the bishops of the Roman synod (485) as they appealed to something *not possessed by all bishops*,[48] namely, the *Tu es Petrus* investiture from Christ to St. Peter and his successors in the Roman bishopric. This was not a normal regional synod of head and members. They were effectively working with the concept that full power (*plenitude potestasis*) was given to St. Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ to be passed on to his heirs in the papal throne in order to feed, tend, and govern the universal flock of the Church.

More details on this mentality come from exploring more of St. Gelasius I (492–496). He comes to the Acacian affair having already been the author of some of the letters coming from the Roman chancery underneath St. Felix, and so he was more than familiar with the goings on in the East. Everything centered upon the *Henotikon* being supported by Acacius, the two Peters of Alexandria and Antioch, Emperor Zeno, and then by the latter's successor, Anastasius. This was understood by the popes as the East violating the rules of the Church and not giving due submission to the Church's authority. Since Chalcedon had been confirmed by the Apostolic See, there was no room for taking it back.

---

symbolized in the "keys." The keys here work together with the Pope's solicitude, or care, for all Christians, thereby showing the keys as also an administrative and jurisdictional reality.

[47] *Collectio Avellana* 1.70, in *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics*, by Scheeben, 344n15.

[48] Harkening back to St. Gelasius's use of the availability of any bishop to excommunicate Acacius, this here proves that he was simply covering his bases. Pope Felix III himself, who took part in this 485 synod, held to a unique authority that isn't shared by all bishops that went into his decree against Acacius.

This Acacian affair afforded the opportunity for the bishops of Rome to argue against any notion of the independence of Eastern sees from the authority of St. Peter. In short summary, St. Gelasius held that the laws of the Church required that all appeals "should be referred to this see [Rome], *but that from its sentence no appeal could be made.*"[49] This right to judge all cases is due to the fact that Rome's primacy came from the "*words of Jesus Christ*, the tradition of our Fathers, and the authority of the canons . . . in order that it may have *authority to judge all* the Church."[50] Even if every bishop has a right to use the keys of the kingdom to bind and loose in his diocese, all that has been bound or loosed by other bishops can be overridden by a more authoritative loose or bind by the See of Peter.[51]

In order to prove the irreformability of Chalcedon, St. Gelasius argued with the following regarding the prerogatives of the papal office:

> Let no true Christian ignore the fact that the constitution of *any synod* which has been approved by the consent of the whole Church can be executed by no other see than the first, which *confirms any synod by its authority* and watches over it through continuous supervision, especially because of its principate, which the Blessed Peter the Apostle obtained *through the word of the Lord* and *which it has always retained and continues to retain.*[52]

This is illuminating since, in his mind, even a synod which has the full "consent" of the whole Church cannot be lawfully executed until it receives the approval of St. Peter's authority. In response to the Eastern protest that Acacius had not been deposed by an ecumenical council,[53] Gelasius responded by saying what was already cited but will be cited again for emphasis:

---

[49] Thiel, ed., *Epistolae Romanorum*, t.1., 392, as quoted in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, by Scott, 214 (emphasis added).

[50] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 215 (emphasis added).

[51] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 215; see also Francis Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 117–18.

[52] *Collectio Avellana*, Epistle 95, 10–11, in *The Idea of Apostolicity*, by Dvornik, 117 (emphasis added). Interestingly enough, St. Gelasius had said that Pope Felix's condemnation of Acacius depended on Chalcedon. Here, St. Gelasius asserts that the successor of St. Peter executes the decrees of councils by his own authority.

[53] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 141n43.

> The apostolic see has often had the liberty (*facultas*), *without a synod* (*sine synodo*) *preceding it*, to loose those whom a synod had unjustly condemned, and also, if necessary, to condemn others without the convocation of a synod.[54]

He goes on to give historical examples of this, such as with Sts. Athanasius, John Chrysostom, and Flavian of Constantinople, and he thinks Dioscorus was judged by papal authority.[55] However, since all these Roman interventions were conducted with a synod of bishops under the pope, St. Gelasius must have meant that the pope does not need an ecumenical council to judge in the case of bishops. This same pope also bears witness to the concept of Roman infallibility, or the indefectibility of the church of Rome. Still within this feud over Chalcedon, the *Henotikon*, and the Eastern patriarchs, St. Gelasius wrote a letter to the Emperor Anastasius which describes his own consciousness of a divine protection against error in the Apostolic See:

> This is just what the apostolic see takes great care against—that because its pure roots are in the Apostle's glorious confession, that it be marred by no crack of wickedness, no contagion. For if, God forbid, *something we trust could not happen*, such a thing were to result, *how could we dare resist any error*? Whence would we seek correction for those in error . . . what are we to do about the entire world, if, God forbid, *it were misled by us*?[56]

Here, the pope not only suggests that God would not allow the Apostolic See to defect in the Christian faith but that if she would err, there would be no sufficient judge left in the Church to condemn heresies. In other words, if Rome collapses in the faith, then there are no other resources to offer a hope of return to the truth for anyone. Of course, St. Gelasius was merely engaging in an impossible hypothetical in order to illustrate his belief that God would not allow Rome to falter in the

---

[54] *Collectio Avellana*, Epistle 95, 4–5, in *The Idea of Apostolicity*, by Dvornik, 118 (emphasis added). Gelasius also thought that the acceptance of Chalcedon (451) already provided enough basis for a disciplinary movement against Acacius.

[55] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 118.

[56] Thiel, ed. *Epistolae Romanorum*, t.1., 353, as cited in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Robert B. Eno, SS (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1984), 164 (emphasis added).

faith. In another letter to the East, we find him once again entertaining what, for him, are hypothetical impossibilities:

> If we [*Rome*] lose them [*faithfulness to the truth and communion*], God forbid, how could anything ever be restored again, especially if in its summit, the apostolic see, it became attainted, *something God would never allow to happen*. . . . If I, God forbid, were to become an accomplice in the evil, then I would be in need of remedy myself, rather than being able to offer one; and the see of blessed Peter, (*something that God would never allow to happen*) would be seeking a remedy from elsewhere rather than itself offering a remedy (to others).[57]

With a rare clarity, St. Gelasius argued forcefully for the infallibility of the Roman See,[58] and he based it entirely on the fact that Rome alone is the final judge in all matters pertaining to the Church. Further, that role as final judge is rooted in promise of Christ to St. Peter, the Tradition of the Church, and the canons of Sardica.[59] According to prestigious patristic scholars, Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, St. Gelasius held the claim that the Apostolic See "alone had ultimate authority in matters of doctrine."[60] If the final judge were to impose the entire Church in error, then the gates of hell would have prevailed against the Church. If that judge were to ever become corrupt or heretical, then no justice can be served. Surely, the pope argued, this will not be allowed under the nose of divine providence. And yet these papal claims were being made, according to Orthodox historian Dr. George Demacopoulos,[61] when Rome's dealings with Acacius were actions "operating beyond the bounds of its canonical jurisdiction."[62] In return, St. Gelasius simply thought that it was the fault of the Easterners who "*refused to obey the first See*, which is urging healthy and right things."[63]

---

[57] Thiel, ed., *Epistolae Romanorum*, t.1., 302, 306, in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Eno, 165 (emphasis added).

[58] St. Gelasius roots the infallibility of Rome in the promise "the gates of hell will never prevail" (Matt 16:18) and reasons that this promise pertains to the verdicts of the Apostolic See; see Letter 10.9–10, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 114.

[59] Gelasius, Letter 10.9–10, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 114.

[60] Neil and Allen, eds., *Letters of Gelasius*, 49.

[61] He follows the same reasoning as Edward Denny, Frederick Puller, and Vladimir Guettée.

[62] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 97.

[63] Gelasius, Epistle 10.5, in Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 98 (emphasis added).

It can be safely said that St. Gelasius understood the breach between East and West during his time to be rooted in the fact that the majority in the East did not "respect Roman privilege."[64] The late Anglican historian, Stanley L. Greenslade, was apt to say, when commenting on the Acacian Schism, that the "great schism between Latin West and Greek East . . . was being prepared *in the early centuries*."[65] By way of summarizing the papal claims made by St. Gelasius, George Demacopoulos understands this pope to be claiming that the "whole Church has been entrusted to the examination of [the Roman] see," that she "ought to judge the whole Church," that she can't be "judged by anyone," and that her verdicts cannot be "scrutinized" or "overturned by another."[66] The East, according to Demacopoulos, had no acceptance of these claims.[67]

[64] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 99; I disagree with Demacopoulos that Gelasius's accusations of the East were "never really framed as a dogmatic or heretical fault" (99), for elsewhere Gelasius makes clear that communion with Acacius would involve the taint of heresy. See Gelasius's Letter 1, To the Bishops of the East, in *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, by Eno, 165.

[65] Stanley L. Greenslade, S.C.M., *Schism in the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1964), 70 (emphasis added).

[66] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 98.

[67] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 98. Demacopoulos takes the view, if it can't already be suspected by the title of his book (*The Invention of Peter*), that the papal claims to be heir and successor to St. Peter, and particularly to his office of primatial authority over the universal Church, were escalated from primitive forms during times where the authority of the Roman bishops was challenged, creating a sort of "papal anxiety of weakness" (2). Thus the Petrine inheritance claimed by the popes of Rome was an effort to supply a certain prestige and legal authority over other churches. As a result, there was also a hermeneutic of suspicion at work (see Matthew R. Crawford, review of *The Invention of St. Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity*, by George E. Demacopoulos, *Review of Biblical Literature* (2014), available at *Academia.edu.*, https://www.academia.edu/7545007/Review_of_George_E._Demacopoulos_The_Invention_of_Peter_Apostolic_Discourse_and_Papal_Authority_in_Late_Antiquity). Where popes asserted their Petrine prerogatives, this was to make up for their rejection by others. While Demacopoulos claims not to be answering whether these papal claims were "right or honest or true" (p. 5), there is certainly a sense, in the book, that some of the historically verifiable rejections of papal authority are indicative that it was not a universally held belief. Thomas F. X. Noble, in his review of Demacopoulos's book, goes so far as to say that the author "insists that Rome's bishops had no legitimate basis for any power and authority beyond Rome's immediate environs" and that, from Leo the Great, "the popes 'invented' Peter as a touchstone for their 'aggrandizement,'" (Review of *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity*, by G. E. Demacopoulos, *The Journal of Religion* 95:2, [2015]: 258–59, https://doi.org/10.1086/681678), though I sense that is a stretch from what Demacopoulos intended; at least Noble questions this explanation. My immediate reaction to this is that there is, of course, the possibility of rejecting authority, but a rejection of authority doesn't automatically spell the invalidity of that authority. One could point to this as a piece of corroborating evidence in an overall broader argument to negate the veracity of papal claims, but by itself,

J. N. D. Kelly reads St. Gelasius as taking for himself "every opportunity of inculcating his conviction of the supremacy of the Roman see."[68] As for whether there is a higher court than that of the Apostolic See of St. Peter, the answer, wrote Philip Schaff, is "clearly announced"[69] in the mind of St. Gelasius in the negative.

During his life, St. Gelasius might have appeared as a proud authoritarian. Unsurprisingly, in his reading of this pope, Fr. Vladimir Guettée gives the picture of a proud man who had questionable motives and whose historical knowledge was lacking.[70] However, as J. N. D. Kelly describes,[71] "the extraordinary reverence with which he was held by contemporaries is reflected in a description left by the monk Dionysius Exiguus," who "stresses his *humility*, his determination *to serve rather than rule*, his delight in conversation with God's servants and in Bible meditation, his *personal mortification and generosity to the poor*, and the way in which, modelling himself on the Good Shepherd, he lived as well as taught the divine precepts."[72]

Despite this pope being venerated as a saint by both East and West, and despite this report of his sanctity by St. Dionysius, the reader will not require any help noticing how Edward Denny has a much different reaction to St. Gelasius. For him, the claims made by this pope were just as inaccurate as those made by Pope Leo XIII in the famous *Satis Cognitum*.[73] And yet, there was no outcry from the Eastern bishops accusing St. Gelasius of heresy. In fact, according to Siecienski, there were only

resistance to authority doesn't nullify said authority. As the data presented in the book shows, I think there is corroborating evidence that puts the veracity of the papacy back on the table, despite the verified instances of resistance.

[68] J. N. D. Kelly, "Gelasius I," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 48.

[69] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311–600* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910), 324.

[70] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 196–200.

[71] J. N. D. Kelly, in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 49.

[72] Emphasis added. See also Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 121, for a similar review of St. Dionysius Exiguus's testimony on the sanctity of St. Gelasius.

[73] Denny argues that Gelasius made an "unjust aggression" of his rights (*Papalism*, 546). The papal claims of Gelasius were, according to Denny, "far-reaching claims on behalf of a divinely conferred 'primacy,' unsupported by an atom of proof, [and] are so unhistorical that the testimony of the Pope who made them must be accounted as utterly worthless for the purpose for which it is adduced by the *Satis Cognitum*" (*Papalism*, 543). Although, according to Denny, the East rejected all of these claims throughout the Acacian Schism, even claiming Rome was at fault, he admits that these papal claims were "largely admitted in the West" (*Papalism*, 546).

"few attacks"[74] on the papacy and the Gelasian power claims. To no surprise, there were appeals to Rome from clergy who were not on board with the disrespect against Chalcedon. From Eastern Illyricum, bishops wrote the following to St. Gelasius:

> It is our desire to *obey your injunctions in all things*, and, *as we have received* from our fathers, *to maintain without stain the precepts of the Apostolic See*. . . . For, even before your injunction, we had avoided the communion of Peter, Acacius, and all his followers . . . and much more now, *after the admonition of the Holy See*, must we abstain from that pollution. And if there be any others, who have followed, or shall follow, the sect of Eutyches or Peter or Acacius, or have anything to do with their accomplices and associates, they are to be entirely avoided by us, *who seek a blameless obedience to the Apostolic See according to the divine commands and the statutes of the fathers*. And if there be any, which we neither suppose nor desire, who, with bad intention, think it their duty to separate from the Apostolic See, we abjure their company, for, as we said, *guarding in all things the precepts of the fathers, and following the inviolable rules of the holy canons, we strive with a common faith and devotion to obey that of your apostolic and singular see*.[75]

While the Illyrian peninsula was technically under Rome's intimate patriarchal responsibility, the letter insists that obedience to the Holy See is part of the tradition of the Fathers. This makes it more related to papal jurisdiction which is general and universal. Most importantly, notice how the unmistakable claim of Rome's deposing of the patriarch of Constantinople was not questioned at all. Rather, it was seen as a matter of *obedience*.[76] Another letter, this time coming from the Eastern Churches, was sent to Pope St. Symmachus (498–514), the successor to St. Gelasius, appealing to the authority of Peter for help. They wrote that

[74] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 132; see also Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, n230 on Frend's article "Eastern Attitudes to Rome during the Acacian Schism," *Studies in History*, vol. 13, *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (1976): 69–81.

[75] Mansi 8.13, quoted in *The Holy See and the Wandering of the Nations*, by Allies, 105–06 (emphasis added).

[76] That the Illyrian bishops understood the discipline imposed by Felix on the East to be an act of universal authority is seen by their strict commitment to remove from their communion anyone who held the communion of Acacius or the others in the East under the Roman ban.

St. Symmachus occupied Peter's Chair by divine arrangement, and then, addressing the pope, they say:

> You are taught daily by your holy teacher, Peter, to tend the sheep of Christ *entrusted to you over the whole habitable world.* . . . But all of us, both the orthodox who are in communion and [also] those who are abstaining from communion, wait upon both God and you for the light of visitation and reception.[77]

The claim was that both those in communion and those unwillingly out of communion, due to the Acacian dispute and other Christological differences, could still be accepted by God if the matter of personal responsibility and culpability should be considered. They both awaited for Rome. This shows that even when a rupture in communion had occurred, Rome was sought for as an arbiter. To the dissenting Easterners, the pope says the following:

> For those, who believed they could disregard the admonition of the Apostolic See have deservedly suffered what is bound to befall *those who forsake their duty.*[78]

This pope was not confused as to whether the Eastern churches owed their obedience to Rome. Some further exposition from that letter is here worth sharing. They appeal to Rome on the following basis:

> You have not only received the *power of binding,* but also that of *loosing,* in accordance with the example of the Master, those who long have been in bonds, nor only the *power of uprooting* and *of destroying,* but also that of *planting and rebuilding,*[79] as Jeremias, or rather as Jesus Christ, of whom Jeremias was the type; nor only that of delivering to Satan

[77] Thiel, ed., Epistle 12, Eastern bishops to Symmachus, 709, as quoted in *The Idea of Apostolicity,* by Dvornik, 123 (emphasis added).

[78] *Collectio Avellana,* doc. 104.16, in *Church and Papacy,* by Jalland, 336 (emphasis added).

[79] This imagery of planting and rebuilding, taken from Jeremiah, is important to store in mind since the same will come up in the claims of papal supremacy in the pontificate of Pope John VIII, and which was accepted by the Photian Council in Constantinople (879–80). The imagery of planting and rebuilding was also used to describe the power of the Roman emperor over the realm.

> for the destruction of the flesh, but also that of restoring by love. . . . Hasten then to aid the East.[80]

However true it is that many Eastern prelates were ready to release themselves from having to obey Roman jurisdiction, such should thankfully not be descriptive for every Eastern bishop. The letter from these bishops makes it clear that they understood the power of excommunication to lie in the hands of the bishop of Rome as far as Eastern territory. They expected him to be able to enact judgment on the dissidents in the East. By appealing to the Petrine investiture of the *Tu es Petrus* from Christ to St. Peter, they showed that they understood the successor of St. Peter to be equally empowered. They also added a reference to St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5), where he urges the Corinthian church to deliver the scandalous members of the church over to Satan. Again, a sign of disciplinary jurisdiction.

And if this was recognized by even some Byzantines at this time, more evidence of the same becomes manifest under the upcoming Pope, St. Hormisdas (514–523). Under his pontificate, the East would finally straighten itself out and submit to the papal claims, hitherto loud and clear, and return to full communion with the Apostolic See. Almost forty years stood between the Acacian break and the reunion effort between East and West, but this effort was kick-started by Emperor Anastasius I. Negotiations opened with Rome and initially involved a willingness to give the pope his terms of restoring unity to the churches. The emperor wrote to St. Hormisdas:

> Your high reputation brings back to our memory the goodness of your paternal affection, so that we ask from you what God and our Saviour taught the holy Apostles in his Divine doctrine and especially blessed Peter, *in whom He constituted the strength of His Church.*[81]

The value of such a statement must be measured by what came after. In response, Pope St. Hormisdas sent legates to Constantinople in 515 with the strict terms and conditions for reunion. At first, the emperor sent

[80] Thiel, ed., Epistle 12, Eastern bishops to Symmachus, 709, as quoted in *The Idea of Apostolicity*, by Dvornik, 123; Mansi 8.221, http://mansi.fscire.it/immagine/4521, as quoted in *Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, Scott, 217 (emphasis mine).

[81] *Collectio Avellana*, Epistle 107, in *Studies on the Early Papacy*, by John Chapman (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), 212.

them back violently in light of the demands being made.[82] It was then left for Emperor Anastasius's successor, Justin,[83] to cope with the Roman terms. St. Hormisdas, for the second time, sent legates to Constantinople in 519 carrying a document which, according to Henry Chadwick, offered restoration of communion on the condition that the "Greek bishops submit to papal authority with signatures to a formula destined to have a long future at Florence (1439) and Vatican I (1870)."[84] This was the famous Formula of Hormisdas, which "made communion with Rome the essential test of membership of the Catholic Church."[85] One of these legates was St. Germanus, bishop of Capua, who is venerated to this day by the Eastern Orthodox (Oct 30),[86] but who nevertheless carried one of the most striking testimonies of papal infallibility in the first millennium to the churches of the East as a *sine qua non* term and condition for restoring holy communion. This formula was given in the form of a *libellus* (from Latin *liber*, "book"), which stated a list of terms through which a signature of one's own would testify to a commitment to follow those terms. This *libellus* stated the following:

> [Our] first safety is to guard the *rule of the right faith* and to deviate in no wise from the *ordinances of the Fathers*; because we cannot pass over the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: "Thou art Peter and *upon this rock* I will build my church." . . . [Matt 16:18]. These [words] which were spoken, *are proved by the effects of the deeds*, because *in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always*

[82] Pope Anastasius II (496–498), not to be confused with Emperor Anastasius, attempted to send embassies to Emperor Anastasius with terms of reunion. This had milder conditions than from St. Hormisdas but the same appeal to divine primacy over the universal Church as well as the demand for the East to obey the commands of the Apostolic See. See "Anastasius II of Rome to Emperor Anastasius," in *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church: Letters from Late Antiquity*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 44–47.

[83] Even though Justin was emperor, it was his nephew Justinian who would succeed him to the imperial throne who was more involved in the epistolary exchanges with the Apostolic See over healing the schism. Justinian succeeded to the throne of his uncle in 527.

[84] Chadwick, *East and West*, 53.

[85] Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, third ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 51–52.

[86] See *Orthodox Europe: Latin Saints of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Rome*, at *Orthodoxengland.org*, http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/saintsg.htm. St. Benedict is reported to have seen his souls taken to heaven upon death; see James Gibbons, *The Roman Martyrology* (Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1916), 333–334.

> *been preserved without stain.* . . . We condemn, too, and anathematize *Acacius*, formerly bishop of Constantinople, *who was condemned by the Apostolic See*, their confederate and follower, or those who remained in the society of their communion, because Acacius *justly merited a sentence in condemnation* like theirs in whose communion he mingled. No less do we condemn Peter of Antioch with his followers, and the followers of all mentioned above. . . . Moreover, we accept and approve *all the letters* of blessed Leo the Pope, which he wrote *regarding the Christian religion*, just as we said before, *following the Apostolic See in all things*, and *extolling all its ordinances*. And, therefore, I hope that I may merit to be in the one communion with you, which the Apostolic See proclaims, in which there *is the whole and the true and the perfect solidity* of the Christian religion, promising that in the future the names of those separated from the communion of the Catholic Church, that is, *those not agreeing with the Apostolic See*, shall not be read during the sacred mysteries. But if I shall attempt in any way to deviate from my profession, I confess that I am a confederate in my opinion with those whom I have condemned. However, *I have with my own hand signed this profession of mine*, and to you, Hormisdas,[87] the holy and venerable Pope of the City of Rome, *I have directed it*.[88]

Whatever might be deduced from this explicit formula, one thing that cannot be denied is that throughout the years from 484 to the writing of this document (519), the popes of Rome had kept their beliefs, terms, and conditions entirely fixed and unswervingly the same. Aside from certain dispensations regarding the names of certain bishops being left on Eastern diptychs, the Roman terms never were altered. Those terms had been characterized by both Puller and Denny as unjust and aggressive claims of universal and immediate jurisdiction. If by this time the papal claims had been proclaimed loudly and clearly, as many historical scholars testify, then they were still being so proclaimed by the year 519,

[87] Notice here the *libellus* was not a statement from Hormisdas addressed to the East. Rather, it was an address meant to express the message of the signatories addressed to Hormisdas, even if it was produced in Rome by Hormisdas.

[88] Denzinger and Rahner, eds., *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 73–74 (emphasis added).

when the Eastern bishops had rejoined the peace and communion of the Apostolic See.

Truth be told, the only side which changed was that of the East, which had, after years of resistance, decided to remove Acacius from the diptychs and follow the rule of the Apostolic See. These were, as Pope St. Symmachus said, everyone's "*duty*," and to fail in this regard was also to "strive against the power of St. Peter."[89] Therefore, regardless of what one takes away from this historical data, the East's signing of the Formula of Hormisdas was a statement in action affirming that Rome had not been wrong, much less heretical, *for all these years hitherto 519*. The formula also mandated the letters of St. Leo the Great as worthy of subscription and adherence, which no doubt included his writings regarding the authority of the Apostolic See. Edward Denny himself admits that within the Leonine corpus, much of which are letters, "can undoubtedly be found the germ which ultimately developed in those claims to be absolute Monarch over the Church, which are embodied in the Vatican decrees and the *Satis Cognitum*."[90]

When the papal legates finally arrived at Constantinople, the patriarch John II (518–520) signed the *libellus* and scrubbed all the names off the diptychs of those who had been involved in the Acacian troubles, as demanded by the pope.[91] In addition to John II, the entire clergy of the patriarchate of Constantinople also signed. In a letter from the Emperor Justin to St. Hormisdas, we read that the emperor willed the whole realm of the East to mimic Constantinople in subscribing to the *libellus*:

> Most religious Father, know that what we have so long earnestly sought to effect is done. John, the bishop of New Rome, *together with his clergy*, agrees with you. The formulary which you *ordered*, which is in agreement with the *council of the most holy fathers*, has been subscribed by him. In accordance with that formulary, the mention at the divine mysteries of the prevaricator Acacius, formerly bishop of this city, has been forbidden for the future, as well as the other bishops. . . . And since *all our realm is to be admonished to imitate the example of the imperial city, we have directed everywhere our princely commands*, so great is

[89] Citation from Peter Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire: Religious Policy of Anastasius the Great 491–518*. 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1974), 87.

[90] Denny, *Papalism*, 94 and 98.

[91] Euphemius and Macedonius, both successors of Acacius, were not publicly anathematized.

> our desire to restore the peace of the Catholic faith to our commonwealth.[92]

If someone were to keep one finger on the condemnation of Acacius (484), another on the apologia of St. Gelasius on behalf of Pope St. Felix III's actions in condemning Acacius, and finally a third on this announcement of the Byzantine emperor approximately three and half decades later, one can see, along with Symonds, how this was a "complete capitulation on the part of the Easterns."[93] Rome never budged from the get-go, and by this time, the Byzantine emperor was on Rome's side. Not only was the formula signed by the current patriarch, John, but both of his successors, Epiphanius (520–536) and St. Menas (536–552), had put down their signatures as well. On the extent of acceptance of the Eastern subscription, Fr. Luke Rivington cites the Gallican theologian Jacques Bossuet's[94] *Defensio Cleri Gallicani*, which includes the following description of those who signed the formula:

> And this profession, dictated by the Pontiff Hormisdas, was accepted by all the Eastern bishops and their leaders, the patriarchs of Constantinople. On which account the Western bishops, especially the Gallic, rejoice much, so that it is certain that this formula was *approved by the whole Catholic Church*.[95] Justinian the Emperor sends the same profession on two separate occasions. His second subscription ran thus: "Wherefore, as we have said before, following *in all things* the Apostolic See, we proclaim *what is ordained by it*, and promise that the same be kept without fail, and *we promise to compel all bishops to make their profession according to the contents of that formulary*, so that the most holy

---

[92] Mansi 8.456, *Sacra imperatoris Justini ad Hormisdam*, quoted in *The Holy See and the Wandering of the Nations*, by Allies, 164 (emphasis added).

[93] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 158.

[94] As was described above, Bossuet rejected the idea that the pope was infallible in his decrees apart from the cause of the consent of the Church. And yet he still understood the divine institution of the Petrine office in the Roman bishopric as detailed in the Formula of Hormisdas.

[95] It is obvious that a good portion of the East did not accept the Formula of Hormisdas, as they continued to reject the Council of Chalcedon (451) and ultimately endured in separation from the Church even to this day in the Oriental Orthodox communities. What Bossuet means here by "whole" is the sizable majority of the East who explicitly embraced Roman communion and reaffirmed their Chalcedonian commitment.

> patriarchs should make it to your Holiness, the metropolitans, to the patriarchs, and the rest [of the bishops] to their own metropolitans."[96]

With a reception this wide, one wonders how this is not considered on par with an official decree of an ecumenical council. According to Fr. Adrian Fortescue, the formula was signed by the Greeks and Latins at the Council of Constantinople 869 and confirmed twice again at the Councils of Lyons (1272) and Florence (1439), before again being cited at Vatican I.[97] This document served as a universal standard for the Roman communion from this point going forward. Therefore, "it cannot be denied," says Fr. Klaus Schatz, "that the Roman claims were not only known in the East but were quite often accepted."[98]

Scholarly interpretations, though somewhat varied, all come to very similar conclusions about what *the formula intended to communicate.* According to Orthodox Byzantinist Ed Siecienski, the formula was "one of the strongest affirmations of Rome's teaching authority *ever accepted in the East.*"[99] Fr. Klaus Schatz reports that it "clearly expresses the Roman position: Rome is the only ultimate norm for ecclesial communion and the true faith," and that it forced "the East to acknowledge the formal principle that the guarantee of the true faith was only to be found in union with the Roman church."[100]

Those not agreeing with the doctrine of the Roman See were simply not in the communion or were on their way out if discovered. According to Dr. Alexander Evers, Professor of Classical Studies and Ancient History,[101] unlike the moderate *Henotikon*, this formula "did not show any intention of compromise: all parties, factions, congregations, and communities of the faithful, their leaders, as well as individual souls, were to subject themselves to the faith and the authority of the See of Rome."[102]

---

[96] Luke Rivington, "The Acacian Troubles," *Dublin Review*, vol. 114 (1894), 371–72 (emphasis added).

[97] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 85.

[98] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 52.

[99] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 132 (emphasis added).

[100] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 52.

[101] Professor Alexander Evers, Oxford educated, is director of the *Collectio Avellana* Project at Loyola University Chicago. The *Collectio Avellana* is the Latin corpus containing all the pertinent letters of St. Hormisdas in relation to the Eastern affairs during the Acacian schism; see Neil and Allen, eds., *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church*, 9–10.

[102] Alexander Evers, "East and West, Emperor and Bishop: Hormisdas and the Authority of

Ever writes further, "With his *libellus*, Hormisdas made everyone bow to the authority of the See of Rome, particularly the East, founded on the very words of Jesus Christ."[103]

"Acceptance of this document," writes Greek Byzantinist Peter Charanis, "meant, of course, absolute submission to the Pope;"[104] a document which aimed at procuring the "recognition of the supremacy of Rome, come what may."[105] The Council of Chalcedon and all the epistles of St. Leo were to be accepted, or no chance of communion would be offered by Rome. It was first signed by the bishops of Illyricum.[106] For John J. Norwich, consent to the formula was an "almost conditional surrender"[107] to the papal assertions stretching back to the late fifth century. Fr. Francis Dvornik notes the contrast between the Eastern pattern of resisting Roman encroachments and what it came to accept at this point: "We notice with considerable surprise that the Byzantine prelates, who had been so determined to defend the autonomy of their Church in the course of this controversy, all signed the *Libellus* Hormisdas, the document which defined clearly the primacy of the Roman See."[108] According to Volker L. Menze, Professor of History and Medieval Studies (CUE),[109] "By implementing the *libellus* together with an imperial edict, the faith of Rome was unquestionably accepted, and thereby the *primacy of Rome established also in the East.* It was more than a general council could ever possibly have done for the papacy."[110] Walter Ullmann perhaps stretches the reality but is undoubtedly proximate: "The imperial government now recognized the function of the Roman church as the supreme tribunal concerning all questions of Christian faith and ecclesiastical dogma."[111] Surprisingly, Orthodox

the See of Rome," in *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: Conflict and Compromise*, eds. Andrew Fear, José Fernández, and Mar Marcos (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 174–75.

[103] Evers, "East and West, Emperor and Bishop," in *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity*, eds. Fear, Fernández, and Marcos, 180.

[104] Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire*, 91.

[105] Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire*, 91.

[106] Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, 126.

[107] John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (London: The Folio Society, 2003; reprint of Penguin Books, 1990), 189.

[108] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A. Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 61.

[109] Central European University.

[110] Volker L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75 (emphasis added).

[111] Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 40–41

theologian Fr. Alexander Schmemann states that "*whole essence of the papal claims* cannot be more clearly expressed than in this document, which was imposed upon the Eastern bishops."[112] A variety of other scholars confirm this interpretation.[113]

Not all are on board, however. While W. H. C. Frend recognizes that the formula healed the schism between Old and New Rome, "with the primacy of the elder city safeguarded," and that "*the east was humiliated*," the real influence "in ecclesiastical matters lay with the emperor."[114] If it weren't for the policies of the Emperor Justin and his nephew Justinian, the East would have been content to exalt the Christological *modus vivendi* semi-achieved with the *Henotikon*, or worse, an eventual full repudiation of Chalcedon. It gets interesting when we observe the investigation of Fr. John Meyendorff who, while recognizing that the formula sought to make "the pope a criterion of orthodoxy,"[115] takes a far more hesitant interpretation regarding the Eastern reception of it. He states the signatures given to it "implied an unprecedented recognition, by Easterners, of Roman doctrinal prestige,"[116] but that such a fact shouldn't convince anyone that East and West "suddenly acquired the same perception of authority in the Church."[117] Of course, this is

[112] Alexander Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963), 240. This admission is particularly surprising because the contemporary Orthodox Church traces its hierarchical lineage back to the Eastern episcopate that subscribed to the Formula of Hormisdas. If the contents of the formula were heretical, then that would mean that a collapse into heresy exists in the historical lineage of the Orthodox Church. It is all the more important, therefore, for Orthodox contemporaries to read the contents of the formula as orthodox.

[113] Carroll agrees: "Chalcedon was affirmed; the full authority of the Pope acknowledged" (*The Building of Christendom*, 148); J. N. D. Kelly ("Hormisdas," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 53) states the signing of the *libellus* was "not only acceptance of the Chalcedonian Christology, but a clear acknowledgement of Rome as the apostolic see in which the Catholic faith had always been preserved in its purity." Chadwick says: "In 519 Pope Hormisdas seemingly triumphed over Greek ambitions for autonomous decisions in the east" (*East and West*, 53); Aidan Nichols writes: "The *Libellus Hormisdae*, which the Byzantine bishops now signed, remained one of the clearest Eastern affirmations of the Roman primacy as an effective primacy of doctrinal authority—and not simply a 'primacy of honor'" (*Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 210).

[114] W. H. C. Frend, "Christianity in the Roman Empire," in *The Christian World: A Social and Cultural History of Christianity*, ed. Geoffrey Barraclough (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 59.

[115] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 213.

[116] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 214.

[117] Meyendorff, Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions, 214.

probably true, especially in light of how the papacy and the episcopate clashed, albeit under imperial coercion, in the forthcoming dispute over the Three Chapters (544–553) controversy. In reality, whether the Eastern bishops were sincere or not in their adhesion to the formula, the fact observed here is that *they formally signed it*, never repudiated it, and digested the implications so far as it went.

And yet, with all the above being stated, the two classical Anglican apologists against the papacy, Edward Denny and Frederick W. Puller, have come to radically different opinions from the scholars cited above. Some Orthodox readers have perceived in these two figures a formidable refutation to the "inaccurate" historical claims of the papacy. For Denny, the Formula of Hormisdas carries the same value as its accuracy, and since he thinks there had been several instances where the Apostolic See was poisoned by heretical occupants, the formula can't be considered objectively true.[118] The claims made for Rome in the formula, says Denny, are typical of any who has the right "to require satisfactory guarantees of orthodoxy from those bishops who, being out of communion with him, desired the restoration of intercommunion."[119] He thinks, therefore, the claims made for Rome here could be made for any bishop who is in possession of the correct faith. Puller, on the other hand, recognizes that the formula contains a "very high-flying statement of Hormisdas' claims on behalf of his see, such a statement as no Eastern bishop or saint had ever signed before,"[120] and elsewhere calls it "obnoxious."[121] Therefore, Puller and Denny cannot even agree on the appropriateness or legitimacy of what the formula claimed to begin with. The former, as shown below, says it was papal usurpation whereas the latter says it was a prerogative of every bishop, depleting all uniqueness whatsoever.

---

[118] Denny, *Papalism*, 384–418.

[119] Denny, *Papalism*, 412.

[120] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 398. On p. 423, he says that the Formula of Hormisdas, as sent by Hormisdas, contained claims unacceptable to the East: "No Eastern of the first six centuries, very few Easterns of any century, would dream of inserting such a statement into a document drawn up by themselves, unless they were acting under compulsion." Clearly, Puller thinks the formula already contained doctrines in sixth century Rome that are used as a criterion by both Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox as a justification for their severance from Roman communion today, and since the eleventh century and sixteenth century, respectively. Interestingly enough, if Rome was loud and clear about this in the sixth century, what took the Greeks five or six more centuries to decide that they could no longer commune with Rome?

[121] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 402.

In any case, Puller[122] is famous for claiming that when the Emperor Justin, through his nephew Justinian, presented the Formula of Hormisdas in front of many Eastern bishops, they rightly rejected the "usurping claims of the Roman See."[123] So now it will have to be examined as to whether, despite the scholarly consensus to the contrary, the East rejected the formula. Is this the case? Puller claims a significant portion of the East signed a *different formula* which purposefully and conveniently cleaned off all the papal claims from the original formula. The East, in other words, was supposed to have been allowed to determine its own terms of unity with Rome.[124] The schism, thinks Puller, was solved on the East's "own terms, rather than on the pope's terms."[125] Somehow, according to Puller, the papal claims were brought in and, in a demonstration of Eastern autonomy, were rejected entirely. Such is a mischaracterization of the East, let alone the facts.

In the first place, these two authors point to the fact that when Patriarch John II of Constantinople signed the formula, he included a preface to the body that included a statement saying that both the Roman See and the imperial see were "one see."[126] By saying they were both one see, the idea is that John was able to sneak into his own formula to Hormisdas that the church of Constantinople was equal to what Rome claimed in the formula. However, such could not possibly be the case, for the formula does not specifically refer to a place of authority of the Roman church unto which such an equation can be made.[127] If one reads the formula carefully, what is claimed is a divine promise of doctrinal indefectibility to the Apostolic See of Rome based upon the *Tu es Petrus* investiture from Christ to St. Peter. Authority is implied, but the formula was more concerned with the divine protection of the faith. Moreover, the formula says this promise had been demonstrated by the facts of

[122] He gives far more treatment to this claim than does Denny. In fact, the latter draws from Puller directly.

[123] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 402. Notice how, contra Denny, Puller sees the original formula as containing illegal papal claims. On 422, Puller states that the testimony to ecclesial order found in the history of the East was "one long contradiction to the principles laid down in the *libellus*."

[124] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 402 (emphasis added).

[125] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 402.

[126] "Unam esse," *Collectio Avellana*, 607, as quoted in *Catholicism and Papacy: Some Anglican and Russian Difficulties*, by Pierre Batiffol (London: Sands & Co., 1925), 123n1 and 2.

[127] Fr. John Chapman, O.S.B., *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 45–46n4.

history, meaning the Apostolic See had *always* kept the Catholic religion without blemish.

Now, the church of Constantinople had been dipping into heresy on more than one occasion and for extensive periods of time going all the way back to her founding by Constantine in the fourth century. If no one else, the formal heretic Nestorius, condemned by the Council of Ephesus (431), was a disqualification for meeting the description of what St. Hormisdas had claimed for Rome. Above all, Constantinople was presently in the weakened position of having to rectify her status in the Church by returning to the communion of the Church after tolerating illegitimate practices in Eastern sees, such as disrespect for Chalcedon.[128] John was in no position to equate the weakened state of Constantinople with a historically successful Roman orthodoxy. If the "one see" business is not meant to characterize an equality of authority between Constantinople and the Apostolic See, *then it must be a way to signify unity of mind and faith.* Since a divergence of faith and confession was the very cause of the fracture of communion, it would make more sense for John to make agreement of faith the means of satisfaction.

Added to this, the formula speaks of the Petrine inheritance of Rome, whereas John, in his preface, distinguished the See of Rome as the See of Peter and Constantinople as the See of the Imperial City.[129] It is certain that John could not have meant that Constantinople shared in *both* the Petrine inheritance of Rome and her acclaimed doctrinal purity. Neither could it be that John meant to say that just as Rome had emptied her diptychs of Acacius and his successors, so had John, since that was the very dissimilarity which caused the occasion. Rome had dis-fellowshipped certain "unworthy" men, and it was the East's maintenance of their fellowship that had been the primary cause of the dispute, other than the dishonor given to Chalcedon and St. Leo's epistles. Here, Constantinople was being ordered to change her confessional content, not to reflect on her equality with Rome.

Nor could an appeal to the twenty-eighth canon be in reference here, since that canon, as we saw above, only gave to Constantinople privileges of patriarchal supervision of large Eastern territories, and a reiteration of this privilege plays no role in satisfying the demands of St. Hormisdas. It leaves one possibility, which is, by far, the most reasonable. The division

[128] Constantinople had actually been the most submissive to the Council of Chalcedon. The dispute was over whether it sufficiently disciplined those around her who did not give the same respect.

[129] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 61.

between East and West turned most deeply on whether both shared one and the same faith as expressed at the divine Council of Chalcedon and the inspired letters of St. Leo the Great. The overriding question was whether John II would follow Rome in professing his adhesion to Chalcedon and St. Leo's epistles and then remove the names of those were dis-fellowshipped. John gave the answer that Old and New Rome were now "one see."[130] Being "one see," therefore, means simply joining together in one faith, fellowship, and mind.

When John died, Epiphanius succeeded and followed his predecessor in signing the formula. And they signed the *full* formula as sent by the pope, with the exception that John of Constantinople omitted a public anathematization of Euphemius and Macedonius, his predecessors who suffered for their defense of Chalcedon.[131] However, it should be noted that the pope had already provided that if they could not agree to pronounce a public anathema upon the "followers" of Acacius, then at least a public anathema on Acacius would be required along with the removal of the names of his followers from the diptychs.[132] It should also be noted that the formula (with the above minor subtraction) that was signed by Justinian (for the second time) and Patriarch Menas of Constantinople later in 536 contained the papal claims in full.[133]

Is there merit to Puller's claim that the East, besides the above signatories, rejected the Petrine injection and signed a different formula more suited to their understanding of Church authority? Not at all. E. Symonds, being an Anglican scholar who could benefit just as much as the Byzantine Orthodox from proven arguments against papal usurpation, admits that the original formula was "widely accepted."[134] However, Justin's nephew Justinian (who would become emperor in the future) wrote to the pope detailing that "some of the orientals cannot be compelled by

[130] "'Ecclesias, id est superioris vestrae et novella istius Romae, unam esse accipio; llam sedem Apostoli Petri, et istius augustae civitatis unam esse definio.' This means to say that the bishop of Rome and the bishop of Constantinople are in agreement, not that he 'identified his own See with the Roman See'—a phrase that has no meaning" (from Batiffol, *Catholicism and Papacy*, 123n2; Batiffol instructs the reader to compare John's usage of the same terminology in another letter to Hormisdas (*Quando Deus*), as well as Hormisdas's response in *Collectio Avellana*, epistles 161 and 169.

[131] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 417.

[132] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 412.

[133] Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 350; J. N. D. Kelly, *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 56.

[134] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 160n3.

exile, sword, or flame to *condemn the names* of the bishops who died after Acacius."[135] The Emperor Justin reported the same to Rome, adding that "several (*nonnullae*) churches of Pontus and Asia, and above all of the *Easterns*," could not cooperate with formally condemning the extent of the persons Rome originally required.[136] The word "Easterns" does not mean the whole East, but rather the "province of Oriens—i.e., Syria and the neighbouring districts."[137] Puller and Denny have seen in this detail enough weight to insert into the whole story the rejection of papal claims and the assertion of Eastern autonomy. But what reasons did these bishops give for not signing the original formula? According to Justinian, they simply could not bring their consciences to "*condemn the names* of those who have died after Acacius" and it was this alone that caused "delay to the general concord."[138] Consequently, Emperor Justin pleaded with the pope to reduce the conditions to not inflexibly require this extensive condemnation of bishops. He added, however, that this adjustment to the original formula "would not apply to the churches which had *already signed the formulary*."[139] There is no shred of evidence that the Oriental clergy made any vocal opposition to the *Tu es Petrus* in reference to Rome or its being the standard of ecclesial communion and orthodoxy. The issue brought up is entirely one of discipline and of how to deal with deceased clergy that, unbeknownst to the pope, did not deserve to be condemned.

In other words, that limited portion of the East[140] which could not,

[135] Thiel, ed., *Epistolae Romanorum*, Epistle 120, in *The Church Universal and the See of* Rome, by Symonds, 161 (emphasis added).

[136] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of* Rome, 161.

[137] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of* Rome, 161n6. The message reported by Emperor Justin is better translated by Philippe Blaudeau in his "Between Petrine Ideology and Realpolitik," in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, eds. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford University Press, 2012), 380: "But there have been some cities and churches both in Pontica and Asiana and particularly in Oriens, whose clergy and people, when tested with all sorts of threats and persuasions, nevertheless could not be turned to remove and reject the names of bishops whose reputation flourished among them. But they think life is harder than death if they are to condemn those individuals when dead in whose life they gloried when they were alive" (Blaudeau is citing from Epistle 129 in *Collectio Avellana* 232.3, 701.16–23).

[138] *Collectio Avellana*, Epistle 196, in *Studies on the Early Papacy*, by Chapman, 215n1.

[139] *Collectio Avellana*, Epistle 232, in *Catholicism and Papacy*, by Batiffol, 125 (emphasis added).

[140] It should be kept in mind that Justin only says that "several" (*nonnullae*) throughout these regions could not sign the original Formula. But "several" out of all these territories doesn't amount to anywhere near "all" or even most. Astonishingly, even Puller admits that the Formula was "probably signed by all, or almost all, the bishops of Thrace, and by some of those in Pontus and Asia" (*Primitive Saints*, 401).

in good conscience, fulfill the demands of the original formula, gave as their explicit reason for not signing that it would be impossible to condemn their people since they were convinced many of these were holy men who upheld Chalcedonian orthodoxy despite their happening to be in communion with Acacius. Note they did not have an issue with removing Acacius, however. Not a single Eastern objection to the papal claims in the original formula was made, and no historian or scholar has been able to produce any evidence of that. If these bishops were that sincere to make known their inability to adhere to the demands of removing the names of all their bishops who were in communion with Acacius, then the same sincerity and integrity *would have caused them to complain about the "usurping claims" of papal prerogatives*, as Puller called it. But no such complaints exist, save for the anti-papal agendas of Puller and Denny.

Pope St. Hormisdas ended up relaxing the demands of anathematizing *literally* all the names of those clerics who were in communion with Acacius, but he never permitted Acacius to escape this pain, which was the very point that St. Hormisdas's predecessors kept insisting.[141] The pope, thankfully, delegated the patriarch Epiphanius of Constantinople to use his *own discretion* for receiving a modified *libelli* of those Eastern bishops to be sent to the Apostolic See for their restoration of communion. It is this willingness on the part of the pope that has caused some authors to consider this the green light for the Eastern signatories to craft their own statement of belief, one which washed away the need to adhere to papal privileges. The pope's instructions to Patriarch Epiphanius were that each of the bishops who couldn't sign the original were to write up their own *libellus*, which were then each "to be reported to the pope himself."[142]

At first, it would appear that the pope was open to the Easterners to make up their own content of faith. Thankfully, the pope made it clear in his letter to Emperor Justin that his instructions to Epiphanius still required the individual *libellus* of each those Easterners who needed the modification to be of the same "tenour of his famous *libellus*."[143] This was also made clear in the instruction to Epiphanius himself, where St. Hormisdas required their "profession of faith" to "be written *eodem tamen, sicut diximus, tenore*, meaning *in the same general terms as the*

[141] With the possible exception of Pope Anastasius (496–498).
[142] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 162.
[143] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 162.

*Pope's formula.*"[144] This allowed for enough flexibility to modify precisely what they had requested, which was to keep the names of those holy bishops who died in communion with Acacius, *but it did not allow for anything else to be modified.* This was not a capitulation on the part of the pope but rather an effort to maintain the absolute essentials of communion while permitting certain adjustments "in order that the greatest possible number might be restored to orthodoxy."[145]

If it is to be trusted, we have a witness from the mid-sixth century that twenty-five hundred *libelli* were received in Rome, consisting probably of a mixture of both original and legitimately modified *libelli*;[146] *libelli* which could not contradict "the authority of the Roman see (on the basis of Mt. 16:18) was strongly emphasized."[147] That witness is a certain Rusticus, nephew of Pope Vigilius, who resided in Rome and thus was in a place to know. Still, that number doesn't include the sending of the formula to Western regions. The full *libellus* found in the *Hispana* collections was the version sent to the Spanish bishops, and we also have a letter from 139 Eastern clerics from *Syria Secunda*, which shows their acceptance. They wrote to the pope:

> But so that your holy angel may have complete knowledge, we courageously anathematize with our very petition both all the ones who have been put forth in the *libellus* and the ones who have been excommunicated by your Apostolic See.[148]

In addition to saying this, they also include the following:

> We pray, therefore, most blessed one, we go on our knees and ask, that you stand up with fervor and zeal and rightly

[144] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 163 (emphasis added).

[145] Blaudeau, "Between Petrine Ideology and Realpolitik" in *Two Romes*, eds. Grig and Kelly, 381.

[146] *PL* 67.1251–2; Mansi 8.579, as quoted in *Studies on the Early Papacy*, Chapman, 216n1. Frend reports only two thousand, curiously; see *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 241.

[147] "St. Hormisdas," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 655.

[148] Cornelia B. Horn, "The Correspondence Between the Monks of Syria Secunda and Pope Hormisdas in 517/518 A.D.," *Journal of Maronite Studies* 1.4 (1997), The Maronite Institute, http://www.maronite-institute.org/MARI/JMS/october97/The_Correspondence_Between.htm (emphasis added).

> have pity for the body that is torn to pieces (*for you are the head of all*). . . . To you God has given the power and authority to bind and to loosen. . . . Be imitators of . . . Peter, that leader of the apostles, *whose seat you adorn.*[149]

Although no evidence exists for any opposition by the East against the papal claims of the original formula,[150] let us, for the sake of inquiry, explore the idea, made popular by Denny and Puller, of the East rejecting the papal claims by a sort of silent withdrawal or a smuggled dodge from the original papal formula. There are a few implications to this that would destroy the credibility of this theory. In the first place, if some Eastern clergy read the original formula and rejected it because of the "usurping claims" of papal supremacy, as Puller describes it, and then proceeded to scrap it for their own *libellus* that omits any notion of the papacy, then that would mean the Eastern clergy understood Rome to have been making intolerable papal claims. If that were the case, then they would have understood Rome to be at variance with the truth. Why, then, would they proceed to regain communion with Rome if Rome's beliefs were at variance with the Apostolic Tradition? The proper course of action would have been to openly indict the papal claims and cite them as a reason to withdraw from communion with the Apostolic See. However, as detailed above, there were no Eastern clergy who made this claim.

Are we then to picture the Eastern clergy as capitulating to a scenario where they liberate themselves from having to believe in the papal claims of Rome only then to enter saving fellowship with Rome who does believe those claims? For men of that era, tolerated theologoumena were not easy to come by, especially at a moment when these great churches were coming to reunite. Disunity by a variance of belief was more worth having than a variance of belief in unity. If there were matters of doctrine which one side could not share, it was nearly always publicly dealt with. If it were the case that the Easterners were keen enough to identify

[149] Horn, "The Correspondence Between the Monks of Syria Secunda and Pope Hormisdas in 517/518 A.D." (emphasis added). Some have tried to say that no reference to the Petrine prerogatives in the original formula were stated, and so this might be a sign that they were willing to accept the excommunications of the unworthy names but not the papal claims. However, what they say about the pope's position all but amounts to the same, and so it could hardly be the case that they were trying to skirt around the papal claims.

[150] Of course, this is excluding those who remained firmly in the anti-Chalcedonian cause. There was a large resistance to the formula by the Miaphysites. They were equally intolerant of the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of St. Leo; see Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1947), 42–43.

some unlawful heterodox claims in the original formula, it would have been irresponsible and dishonest for them to pass it over even if they attempted to simply omit them.

Perhaps, if the entire East had convened to omit the papal prerogatives, there might be a rationale for remaining silent, but when Constantinople and its diocese signed the full formula as it came from the pope, now you had some Easterners accepting what they would have perceived as an unlawful heterodox claim of papal authority while others rejected it, all the while being peacefully in communion with one another. This is the sort of thing that these religious men of that era could not have done psychologically because of a commitment to conserve pure communion. And yet this is the story we are expected to believe by Puller. Such a passive coexistence of contrary beliefs is not reflective of this era of time. This militates against the theory that the Easterners were somehow implicitly avoiding the Petrine claims of Rome by their requested modification to the original formula.

Another point worth mentioning is that, if the East understood Rome to have overstepped her boundaries with unlawful papal claims, then that would mean that sixth century Rome was heterodox. But no Orthodox historian or theologian exists today to venture so far as to say that Rome, at that time, was heterodox. Therefore, Puller's theory is absurd. The best recounting of the story is that Rome was thoroughly orthodox, that the Oriental clergy who had trouble signing the original formula were honest[151] enough to express their difficulties in signing, all which had to do strictly with the removal of men from their diptychs, and that no intention of protesting the papal claims existed even with the allowance given to them to write up their own *libelli* conformable to the substance of the original. There are others who claim that the original formula did not even contain explicit claims of papal prerogatives at all but was simply a rather complex description of how Rome had successfully maintained the faith. If that were the case, then the Oriental clergy would not have had any reason to give a modified *libellus*.

Just what does the Petrine statement in the formula intend to mean? St. Hormisdas states that Christ gave a certain promise, namely, that upon Peter and his confession, both as single foundation rock, Christ would build his Church and that the gates of hell would *never prevail against it.*

[151] In fact, since the Christians of the Orient were honest enough to stall their subscription to the Formula of Hormisdas on account of their inability to abide by the strict removal of names from their diptychs, this would entail that, if they truly had issues with the papal claims in the original formula, they would have likewise voiced their troubles with it.

This is the basic thrust of the *Tu es Petrus* investiture. The interpretation that the rock as simply a floating content of faith that is free to be claimed by any subject is to be greatly doubted. Rome is not being pictured as the accidental embodiment of the rock but one of divinely intended promise. That much is confirmed by the many statements reviewed from popes before St. Hormisdas and especially those afterward, such as St. Agatho (678–681). Most historians who are familiar with the papal claims made when the popes appealed to the *Tu es Petrus* would know that there is a direct application of the promise in that text to the embodied succession from St. Peter's person in the Roman bishopric. Moreover, this is proven by what the formula then states further:

> We cannot pass over the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." These [words] which were spoken are *proved by the effects of the deeds.*

St. Hormisdas understood that the Matthean promise of ecclesial strength and indefectibility stand only as a verbal promise, to which could be added evidence proving it to be true. In other words, there is the promise, and then there is the proof that it has been kept. What proof does St. Hormisdas gives? He writes:

> Because *in the Apostolic See* the Catholic religion has *always been preserved without stain* . . . in which there is the *whole* and the *true* and the *perfect solidity* of the Christian religion.

For St. Hormisdas, the Matthean promise and the perfect doctrinal purity of the Roman See are related as root and tree or promise and fulfillment. Just as Christ said that the rock would keep the Church strong from the powers of death acting against it, so it is fulfilled in the fact that St. Peter's See has never succumbed to heretical innovation. There is a parallel in the perpetuity of the Church, as stated in the Matthean promise, and the perpetuity of orthodoxy in the Apostolic See. Thus, while it is true that the rock is St. Peter's faith and confession, it is equally true that the Fathers understood this faith not to be a free-floating datum but rather as embodied in St. Peter and, by way of legal succession, to those who take up his ministry in the Roman bishopric. In this way, the formula is just a restatement of what St. Hormisdas's predecessor St. Simplicius said in 476:

> Those genuine and clear [truths] which flow from the very pure fountains of the Scriptures *cannot be disturbed* by any arguments of misty subtlety. For this same norm of apostolic doctrine *endures in the successors of him* upon whom the Lord imposed the care of the whole sheepfold, whom [He promised] He would not fail even to the end of the world, against whom He promised that the gates of hell would never prevail, *by whose judgment* He testified that what was bound on earth could not be loosed in heaven.[152]

It should not be forgotten that both Popes St. Hormisdas and St. Simplicius are saints of the Church, and their meaning seems clear. However, it is possible for the Orthodox to take this promise as merely a promise of indefectibility to the Church as a whole, and that, it just so happens out of accident, from a human standpoint, that Rome has kept the faith hitherto. From this less likely interpretation, a future heretical Rome is possible and would better suit an Orthodox reading.

There is also one more issue. There were several saints who lived during the Acacian schism who were, in fact, outside of communion with Rome. How does that happen? Would not this then prove communion with the pope is unnecessary for salvation? That Rome understood the Eastern patriarchs from 484 to 519 to be "out of communion" with herself is arguably the case. St. Gelasius told the Emperor Anastasius, in a letter written sometime in 492–496, that if he were to reinstate the binding form of Chalcedon and remove its challengers from the diptychs, including Acacius, "the multitude of the city of Constantinople will unavoidably obey you much more for the salvation of their souls if you, as their prince, *lead them back to the catholic and apostolic communion*."[153] It is quite clear that the pope understood that anyone, at this

[152] Denzinger and Rahner, eds., *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 64–65 (emphasis added). Lest the reader think that this citation could be reduced to a statement about the Church being infallible, a helpful cross-reference is St. Leo's Sermon 51, wherein he states: "Only that should be ratified in heaven which had been settled by *the judgment of Peter*" (Leo, Sermon 51, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895], rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360351.htm [emphasis added]). Or, even if the whole Church is to be comprehended, read what Pope St. Felix III said in an epistle to Acacius (*The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 397 [emphasis added]): "Nor let us think that either the *judgment of Peter or* the authority of the *universal Church*, by whatever dangers it be surrounded, will ever lose the weight of its force."

[153] Gelasius, Letter 12.10, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 79 (emphasis added).

time, who was associated with Acacius was outside of communion with the true Church. As a result of this Roman strictness, it is nearly impossible to sense any notion of exception to their rules for those who were out of communion. However, what if the report of Acacius only *seemed like* he enjoyed the communion of anti-Chalcedonian heretics but was actually only misrepresented? In this case, even St. Gelasius stated that if evidence should prove that Acacius was intolerant of heretical communion, even after his death, his reputation would be exempt from the exclusion placed upon the original heretics: "On this account, either *let him be shown to be uncorrupted* by what he has shared with the heretics, in whose communion he was implicated, or he cannot avoid being rejected with them."[154]

However, as Fr. John Meyendorff admits, Acacius was "tactically at fault"[155] for being in support of the *Henotikon* (which omitted the binding inclusion of Chalcedon) and for preferring to "deal" with Peter Mongus as the true archbishop of Alexandria, rather than the Chalcedonian John Talaia.[156] And by "deal" with Mongus, Fr. Meyendorff means "formally communicated with him,"[157] even if the latter had styled himself a Chalcedonian at the time. Peter Mongus, however, was shown to have eventually "anathematized Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo."[158] He also happened to accept the compromise of the *Henotikon*, which was supported by Acacius. Thus, it is difficult to remove from Acacius the contamination of compromise. By his association with Peter Mongus, he "caught the infection of treacherous communion, and through the same communion was connected with the same plague as the heretics with whom Peter held communion,"[159] says Pope St. Gelasius.

On the other hand, some historians have sought to exonerate Acacius in such a way as to precisely satisfy the condition that St. Gelasius spelled out to Emperor Anastasius that would achieve his exemption from condemnation, even posthumously.[160] But even Fr. John Meyendorff, who seems to support the exoneration of Acacius, admits that the latter was flexible enough to associate, in some sense, with the heretic Peter

[154] Gelasius, Letter 12.8, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 78.
[155] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 163, 202.
[156] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 198.
[157] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 200.
[158] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume 2*, 40; Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 200.
[159] Gelasius, Letter 27.4, in *Letters of Gelasius*, eds. Neil and Allen, 118.
[160] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 198.

Mongus "when the interests of the empire directed."[161] Whether that is true or not, the point here is that the pope was willing to exempt Acacius from exclusion if it could be shown that he did not participate with the communion of heretics. In modern times, more leniencies might be given to investigate whether he held "culpable" communion with heretics. From the standpoint of the popes at the time, Acacius had partaken with non-Chalcedonians, and that was enough to ignite excommunication.[162]

Such was history. But what about those bishops or persons who were outside of the Roman communion during the time of severance between Rome and the East who are now venerated in the Catholic Church? Puller counts close to twenty saints who either died before they entered formal communion with the Apostolic See during the Acacian schism or who died after the reunion, but whose sanctity and central ecclesial activity thrived during that time when they were not in formal communion with Rome.[163] For example, the original formula of St. Hormisdas required the names of Euphemius and St. Macedonius II, two patriarchs of Constantinople, to be added to Acacius's among the names excluded from communion. Yet, both of these patriarchs outwardly professed Chalcedon, St. Leo's Tome, and brought the pope's name back into the diptychs of the Divine Liturgies in Constantinople.[164] Euphemius had, in fact, removed Peter Mongus from the communion of Constantinople, something for which Acacius was condemned for failing to do.[165] When the emperor required St. Macedonius II to condemn Chalcedon, he courageously said he could do no such thing without an ecumenical council "under the presidency of the bishop of Rome."[166] However, both of these insisted that Acacius should not be condemned by Rome's verdict through Pope St. Felix III, and so did not remove Acacius from their communion.[167]

It is notable, therefore, that when Pope St. Hormisdas gave his *Indiculus*[168] (instructions) to the legates whom he sent to Constantinople to present the formula, the pope allowed for a minor concession for the

[161] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 198.

[162] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 181n209.

[163] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 388–89.

[164] Allies, *The Holy See and the Wandering of the Nations*, 97–98; Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 156.

[165] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 155.

[166] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 156.

[167] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 412.

[168] Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411–533* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 227–29.

"followers of Acacius" who were originally supposed to be condemned by the strict reading of the original formula. Specifically in reference to Euphemius and St. Macedonius, their names were allowed to avoid the anathema of heretics and public condemnation, leaving the requirement for the removal of their names from the diptychs. St. Hormisdas called this a passing "over in silence"[169] but was nonetheless still a consequence of their failing to follow the pope's verdict on Acacius. Puller summarizes: "But Hormisdas in his *indiculus* gives his legates to understand that, if difficulties should be raised, he is willing that the formula should be so far altered as to drop all mention of the *sequaces* from the clause in which the anathema is pronounced. The legates are, however, in any case to insist on the anathematizing of Acacius by name, in accordance with the *libellus*, and on the removal of the names of the *sequaces* from the diptychs."[170]

There is, therefore, a distinction between a formal condemnation and a removal of the names of certain deceased from the diptychs. What is the difference between removing Euphemius and St. Macedonius II from the diptychs and a full-fledged anathema akin to what fell on Acacius? The answer is not clear. It is certainly less than a formal anathematization. Whatever the precise answer to this question is, it may be helpful to employ some later-made distinctions to assist in understanding what was going on.

We might distinguish between *formal* versus *material* schism in order to account for other persons of the East who are venerated as saints but who lived and died outside of formal communion with Rome during this time. A formal schism is where someone knowingly decides he or she is going to perform certain actions which would put him or her outside of the communion with the Apostolic See. Both Euphemius and St. Macedonius II appear to fulfill these conditions in that, besides signing the *Henotikon*, they overtly disobeyed the pope's order to remove Acacius from their communion, something which nearly the whole East came to obey in 519 when they returned to unity with the Apostolic See and under the same papal mandate. Because it was a matter of discipline, and while both these men were persecuted confessors for the true faith of Chalcedon, the decision would fall to Rome as to how to handle their situations and whether their refusal to condemn Acacius merited indefinite excommunication or not.

[169] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 412; Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 72–73.

[170] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 413. *Sequaces* = "followers of Acacius."

From the *indiculus* of St. Hormisdas, he at least calculated a less severe consequence for them than he did Acacius. That much is considerably relevant to the question of how at least St. Macedonius II came to be venerated by the Roman See in later times. And this would also seem to apply in the cases of St. Elias of Jerusalem and St. Flavian II of Antioch, both warrior defenders of Chalcedon in the face of persecution. I think there is plenty of merit for these saints to have had their record revisited by the judgment of the Apostolic See, even posthumously. It is not as if these good men were questionably orthodox who were vehement in their separation from the Apostolic See. Quite the contrary, they agreed with Rome. As the signatories of the Formula of Hormisdas admit, Rome had been the safe harbor protecting the Apostolic Tradition since the beginning. If there was any question of whether Rome had been out of the Church, it would appear all the orthodox at the time were quite certain that she was a clear embodiment of the true Church.

Another notable example of this is St. Sabas the Great, the Cappadocian Syriac monk who lived under the patriarchate of Jerusalem in Palestine. Even though he died at the old age of ninety-three in 532, he had a fulfilling career during those years when Jerusalem was not formally in communion with the Apostolic See. According to the historian Cyril of Scythopolis (525–559), St. Sabas had rejected the use of a certain addition to the Trisagion hymn,[171] which was created by Peter the Fuller. Cyril reports in his *Life of Sabas* that Peter the Fuller had been "anathematized by Felix III, Pope of Rome, both for his heterodoxy and for his said addition to the Trisagion."[172] He follows with: "So it was justly and piously" that St. Sabas rejected Peter's interpolation in the Trisagion hymn. If that connection proves, and it seems to be so, then St. Sabas, in the year 502, recognized the papal jurisdiction over Antioch, almost twenty years before the Acacian schism was healed.

Still, Puller is not satisfied with any of these explanations. Finding out that there were Eastern saints who were bishops or patriarchs who thought that they were already "in the Church" before and after their union with the Apostolic See is simply a *quod erat demonstrandum* that the communion of Rome is nonessential for communion with the Church.[173]

In fact, Puller does not believe that the Church of Christ is necessarily

[171] "Who was crucified for us," in reference to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

[172] Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, ed. John Binns, trans. Richard Price (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 127.

[173] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 386–96, 404–05.

a visible one. The true Church of Christ, while truly one, is not necessarily "a visibly united body."[174] Such a unity is sought for, prayed for, suffered for, but it is not guaranteed. Puller compares the visible unity of the Church to the nation of Israel. When Israel was divided between the North and the South, the "visible unity of the people of God was suspended. But the people remained one."[175] He understands Christ's Church to have an "underlying essential unity which never ceases," and this underlying unity consists of a single faith, a share in the power of the priesthood "transmitted from Christ and His apostles through the unbroken succession of the episcopate," and their share in one legal system of "polity and discipline."[176] Unsurprisingly, this is a basic description of the *Branch Theory* held by most Anglicans. According to the late Michael Ramsey (1904–1988), former archbishop of Canterbury, the idea here is that "the Church is one, yet represented by three great Branches, Greek, Roman, and Anglican, which constitute the Church in different areas, of which each Branch is the rightful possessor. Thus, the claim of unity is made, while the fact of schism is acquiesced in and rationalized by a theory.... The 'Branch Theory' seems, in fact, to be an unconscious attempt to make the best both of unity and of schism."[177]

In fact, Puller extends the parallel between national Israel's division between the tribes and the Church of Christ to explain the schism between East and West. Just like Israel sought a monarchy for unity, but which ended up in outward schism, so also the Church of Christ, "making terms with the world,"[178] unlawfully sought a single head in the pope of Rome, and this monarchic figure was to be the cause of further schisms.[179] Therefore, that Eastern patriarchs were outside of communion with Rome during the Acacian schism not only proves to one such as Puller that communion with Rome is unnecessary to be considered in the Church, but also that the outward visibility of one, single, unified Church is not necessary. Rather, the Church of Christ can exist in different bodies who are, even if simply suspended for a time, in outward schism from each other. The church of Rome was part of the true Church just as much as the church of Constantinople was part of the

[174] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 218n2.

[175] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 220.

[176] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 220.

[177] Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1935), 186.

[178] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 221.

[179] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 221.

same, despite their division in communion. Edward Denny, likewise, asserts that there are separate branches of the Church.[180] Such might certainly aid the Anglican seeking to make sense of this historic period of the Church, but this conception does not come to the aid of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Puller asserts that Christ gave outward visibility to the Church, as a gift, only at the beginning in the first century, but this gift was taken away later on so that the Church of Christ is only essentially unified underneath a number of outward schisms until the end of time.[181] And yet, Metropolitan Timothy Ware states that "the 'undivided Church' is not merely something that existed in the past, and which we hope will exist again in the future: it is something that exists here and now."[182] Indeed, there can only be schisms "from the Church, but not schisms within the Church."[183] Concerning the above Branch Theory, Ware says that it "cannot be reconciled with traditional Orthodox theology."[184] To the question of how this visible unity is maintained, Ware says it is "the act of communion in the sacraments."[185] Interestingly enough, that is not altogether different from the answer Puller gives to the same question, though he believes in ecclesial divisibility.[186]

Orthodox theologian Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy expands the same point of Timothy Ware concerning the Church's unity: "It proceeds from the sacramental nature of the Church and is manifested and expressed in the sacramental life, in the hierarchy, through the tradition of the Church."[187] This unity is so crucial to the Orthodox Church, says Fr. Bobrinskoy, that the "Church would cease to be the Church were she to lose her unity."[188] The *Longer Catechism* of Philaret of Moscow states the Orthodox Church's visible unity is manifested "outwardly by unity of creed, and by communion in prayer and sacraments."[189]

---

[180] Denny, *Papalism*, xiii.

[181] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 221–22.

[182] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 245.

[183] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 245.

[184] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 247.

[185] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 246.

[186] Puller, *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, 218.

[187] Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Church: A Course in Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 126.

[188] Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Church*, 126.

[189] Philip Drozdov, "Q. 261," *The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and David S. Schaff, in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, sixth edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1931, reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 445.

Giving quite the same answer as Fr. Bobrinskoy and the Philaret Catechism to the question of how unity is manifested, Fr. Michael Pomazansky then attempts to explain the consistency of how the Orthodox Church can maintain this crucial visible unity when there are numerous breaks of outward fellowship between patriarchs, bishops, and churches *within* the Orthodox Church.[190] In the first place, then, unity is manifested by sharing in the same faith, sacraments, hierarchical communion, and canonical order.[191] But then, Fr. Pomazansky, moved by sincerity and reality, admits that the outward bond uniting the churches of the universal Eastern Orthodox communion can be broken due to "nondogmatic" issues such as "personal errors of individual hierarchs," communication of "incorrect information," a "violation of the canons of the Church," or a violation in jurisdictional matters.[192] "In such cases, the division touches only outward relations, but does not touch or violate inward spiritual unity."[193]

Interestingly, the Orthodox appear to be able to insist dogmatically that the Orthodox Church's visible unity is essential to her nature, rather than accidental, and yet also realize that this visible unity is not absolutely perfect and immune from exceptional circumstances. On the one hand, there is a dogmatic and necessary confession of visible unity that cannot be changed and then, on the other hand, an admission that there can be extensive visible breaks of the bonds of unity between hierarchs and churches abroad without impugning the Church's unity. However successful or unsuccessful an Orthodox might be in his ability to avoid what appears to be a glaring inconsistency, what is transparent is that some Orthodox scholars do not think that an absolutely perfect external unity, agreement, and cooperation between hierarchs, bishops, and churches at all times is the standard by which to judge whether the Orthodox Church maintains its visible unity. And here is meant not just the invisible internal unity that is underneath the visible, but rather the visible organization. Hints of this kind of reality already show up in St. Paul's epistle to the Church of Corinth, where there were internal divisions. And yet, St. Paul never ceased to refer to them as "one body" in Christ and one Church of Corinth.

---

[190] Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition*, trans. and ed. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997), 235–36.

[191] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 235–36.

[192] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 235–36.

[193] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 235–36.

Sometimes injuries to outward and visible unity can be caused by sinful passions between two or more persons, however prominent. There can be an infiltration of political power, espionage, and persecution that causes an otherwise perfectly unified church to fracture into separate bodies whose leaders are motivated by fear of violence. Surely, in this kind of external imposition on a healthy church, we are not going to impute the sin of schism to the resultant divided bodies. These and other explanations might suffice for some of the internal divisions within Orthodoxy over the centuries, but it remains that, despite these injuries to the visible oneness, some still maintain that the visible oneness is invincible from dissolution. Indeed, as Fr. Bobrinskoy said, if the visible unity of the Orthodox Church were to dissolve, so also would the Orthodox Church.

However, must this generous exceptionality be applied only to the integrity of the Eastern Orthodox communion? When Catholics insist on the theory that the Roman Church is the permanent center and principle of unity, we are often told in response by Orthodox critics that saints who lived and died outside of the orbit of communion with Rome prove the Roman theory wrong.

A perfect example is found in Puller's book *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*. He is focused on how the Antiochene situation of the second half of the fourth century under *St. Meletios vs. Paulinus*, and the fact that some saints lived outside of communion with Rome during the Acacian schism, shows that the Roman theory of its being the principle of ecclesiastical unity was wrong and only to be held by much later ultramontane theologians who anticipated the First Vatican Council. And yet, why could it not be that the complex circumstances also caused a minor fraction in outward visible unity, which does not dissolve that visible unity nor its principle? Perhaps the popes were able to look back and see that, in desire, there was only a material, rather than formal, schismatic act in the lives of certain persons who happened to have died without the full recognition of Rome at the time of their death.

If Catholics could be given some of the same courtesies that the Orthodox use to defend the indestructibleness of the visible unity of the Orthodox Church, despite the *quasi-schisms* that occur in her body, I think the case for the Roman theory of the See of Peter as "principle of unity" could also be shown as indestructible, despite certain exceptional cases in complex circumstances. The healing of the Acacian schism would be precisely the place to see how this might be. For while there were divisions between Rome and Easterners, where some of the latter

saw themselves innocent of all crime and thus "in the Church," the whole schism was healed by a nearly unanimous agreement on the part of the East that the Roman See is divinely fixed as the safe harbor of Apostolic Tradition and communion.

For the reasons already given, this is the single best interpretation of the formula, and it remains a fact that the East was presented this document and its bishops were expected to sign, "which they eventually did,"[194] even if various circumstances only show that they outwardly agreed to it. This sort of generosity to the papal claims is also afforded especially if we consider that the nineteenth century popes onward have made a decisive commitment to consider the aspect of conscience and desire which guide the human being. But even before this, the Council of Trent, following St. Thomas Aquinas, already spoke about the explicit desire for the Sacrament of Baptism being a sort of *baptism of desire* if one were to pass away before being able to reach the physical sacrament. As Fr. Luke Rivington said, the "necessity of communion with Rome is not greater than the necessity of baptism, or of believing the Catholic faith," but given the light of doctrinal development, we can "admit that there are circumstances of a special nature when the baptism of desire suffices, and when a very rudimentary idea of the catholic faith will save a man from the anathema of those who do not hold the faith. The same principle applies to the necessity of communion with Rome."[195] Dare I add the same for the necessity of obedience to Rome? If, after the supposed disobedience of this or that bishop, further facts come to light which reduce the criminality of said disobedience to a rather light level, or no level at all, justice would call for a full remission of that guilt even if posthumously recognized.

---

[194] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 185. If we consider those Easterners who sent in modified *libelli*, they did so in compliance with the pope's order that these must be in the same sense of the original. We've already seen how unlikely it is for these modified *libelli* to represent a sort of unnoticeable attempt to omit adherence to the papal claims. Such a hidden act of joining with Rome while also disagreeing, almost incognito, with her papal claims is nothing short of presenting the East as willing to enter into union with a divergent faith. They showed themselves sincere in that they were willing to die rather than condemn the bishops they were ordered to in the original Formula. Such psychological dedication to accuracy, truth, and integrity would have equally caused them to disagree with the papal claims "from the housetops" if that was their true perspective. When St. Hormisdas put the task to Epiphanius, it was on certain conditions of equality with the original Formula, minus the flexibility on the needless condemnation of persons the Easterners felt were undeserving of it.

[195] Rivington, "The Acacian Troubles," 380.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

# The First See Is Judged by None

BEFORE MOVING TO THE NEXT STAGE of history with Justinian and the Council of Constantinople (553), a brief examination of a certain dispute within the Roman church during the pontificate of Pope St. Symmachus will be useful for understanding how, by the late fifth century, bishops were already articulating justifications for the pope's immunity from being judged by his inferiors.[1] In short, St. Symmachus and Laurentius both claimed to be validly elected and ordained as pope, and so the dispute was over who was the real bishop of Rome. The matter was brought before the Arian king Theodoric since a secular court was still handy for frustrated episcopal affairs. This period was during the Ostrogoth overtake of the West, and it is unfortunate that secular power was consulted, despite how unfeasible other methods proved to be. St. Symmachus was initially decided by Theodoric to be the true holder of the Apostolic See, but there was plenty back and forth, riots of violence, and infighting among the supporters of each claimant to the papal throne. The king himself would vacillate on his initial decision. The dispute lasted from 498 and was finally settled in 506 with the king's order to return Roman church property to Symmachus.

Throughout this controversy, synods were held for the ultimate

[1] For an extensive analysis of the Laurentian Schism, and from which my account is a basic summary, see Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 2014), 69–99.

purpose of healing this papal schism. Certain accusations were brought against Pope St. Symmachus from the Laurentian party, which included a sizeable number of clergy. With much significance, there were bishops who protested these synods since "*there was no precedent for the trial of the Pope by his inferiors.*"[2] In a statement coming from one of these synods held in Rome, consisting of nearly seventy Italian bishops,[3] they "ended with a strong endorsement of the sovereign position of the papacy, asserting that the apostolic see could not be judged by anyone."[4] They say so specifically:

> The person [St. Symmachus] who was attacked ought himself to have called a Council,[5] knowing that to his See in the first place the rank or *chiefship of the Apostle Peter*, and then the authority of venerable Councils *following out the Lord's command*, had committed *a power without like in the Churches; nor would a precedent be easily found to show, that in a similar matter the Prelate of the aforementioned See had been subject to the judgment of his inferiors.*[6]

Of course, the supporters of Laurentius held that there must be a way to judge the pope; otherwise, there would have been no purpose to the synods. When they petitioned the king to order an intervention by one of his traveling representatives, a synod was held in Rome in October of 502. The synod could not even get off the ground without difficulty, but once it did, the final session came to an impasse: "Its verdict was that, as Symmachus was pope, *no human court could judge him and judgment must be left to God.*"[7] According to medieval historian Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, the proceedings reached a verdict which "stated succinctly: 'No one may judge the first see' (*Nemo iudicabit primam sedem*), not even the emperor. Like the doctrine of Gelasius, this sentence, later formed

---

[2] Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*, 71 (emphasis added).

[3] For the Latin, see Mansi 8.252, http://mansi.fscire.it/immagine/4536/#di-comboopere.

[4] Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 38.

[5] Symmachus eventually gave support for its convocation.

[6] Mansi 8.248, http://mansi.fscire.it/immagine/4534/#di-comboopere, quoted in *The See of St. Peter, The Rock of the Church, The Source of Jurisdiction, and Centre of Unity*, by Thomas William Allies (London: Burns & Lambert, 1850), 92 (emphasis added).

[7] J. N. D. Kelly, "Symmachus," *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 50–51; see Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*, 73 (emphasis added).

in a different language, would achieve its full effect only in the eleventh century."[8]

Between the two rivals, the majority of the Italian episcopate supported the cause of St. Symmachus.[9] Interestingly enough, a prominent bishop from Gaul, St. Avitus of Vienne (450–519), made a public defense of papal sovereignty alongside other bishops who judged that a synod "was not competent to judge the pope"[10] in the first place. In a letter to the Roman senators Faustus and Symmachus,[11] both who supported Pope St. Symmachus, St. Avitus stated the following: "What *license for accusation* against the headship of the Universal Church ought to be allowed?" He continues:

> If the Pope of the City be put in question, not a single Bishop, but the Episcopate itself, will appear to be in danger. He who rules the Lord's fold will render an account how he administers the care of the lambs entrusted to him; but it belongs not to the flock to alarm its own shepherd but to judge.[12]

In the same letter, he further illustrates his point:

> It is not easy to understand on what ground or by what law a superior is judged by his inferiors. . . . Love not less in your Church the Chair of Peter, than in your city the metropolis of the World.[13]

---

[8] Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *The Papacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 38.

[9] John Moorhead, "The Laurentian Schism: East and West in the Roman Church," *Church History*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Jun 1978), 125–36.

[10] Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*, 91.

[11] Not to be confused with the pope.

[12] Mansi 8.293, http://mansi.fscire.it/immagine/4557, as quoted in *The See of St. Peter*, by Allies, 92–93 (emphasis added).

[13] Quotation from John Chapman's translation of this letter of St. Avitus; see John Chapman, *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905), 115. It seems plain here that St. Avitus expresses that he doesn't really know a law or principle by which a legal superior can be tried and judged by that superior's inferior. His admonition to love the "Chair of Peter" in the Church more than a patriot loves the metropolis of the world is an astounding analogy which situates the Chair of Peter as akin to the secular metropolis of the empire, only of the universal Church. To overthrow the metropolis of the world (i.e., Rome?) would be a terrible exercise of anarchy by the Roman citizens who are obliged to submit to the authorities. But even so, that much is implied by St. Avitus to be a lack of love for patriotism and the peaceful order of the realm, whereas he is calling the bishops to love

Not in Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) but in the sixth century St. Avitus of Vienne, over six centuries before the definitive separation between the Latins and Greeks, do we read that the pope of Rome has the prerogative to judge the whole Church but not be judged. And by a man venerated on the Eastern Orthodox calendar (Feb 5),[14] no less. Even more explicit on this point is yet another man of the Orthodox calendar (July 17), St. Ennodius, deacon of Milan, who later became bishop of Pavia. He played a central role in bringing the Eastern bishops to submit to Pope St. Hormisdas. During the Symmachian dispute, he wrote the following:

> God perchance has willed to terminate the causes of other men *by means of men*; but the Prelate of that See He hath reserved, without question, *to His own judgment*. It is His will that the successors of the blessed Apostle Peter should owe their innocence to Heaven alone, and should manifest a pure conscience to the inquisition of the most severe judge. Do you answer, such will be the condition of all souls in that scrutiny? I retort, that *to one was said*, "*Thou art Peter*," &c. And again, that by the voice of the Holy Pontiffs, the dignity of his See has been made venerable in the whole world, *since all the faithful every where are submitted to it*, and it is marked out as the *head of the whole body*.[15]

So clear and bold are these claims that Protestant historians have taken careful note. Trevor Jalland writes: "It is not difficult to imagine that such a view would have been highly acceptable to one such as Gregory VII, under whose inspiration the Ennodian principle was embodied *in the Dictatus Papae*."[16] Philip Schaff describes the principle here adduced by St. Ennodius to be the "first clear expression to the absolutism *upon which Leo had already acted*: that the Roman bishop is above every human tribunal, and is responsible *only to God Himself*."[17]

---

the Chair of Peter even more than they love the imperial metropolis, thereby obliging them even more not to overthrow it by an unlawful subjugation. A clearer statement from a saint that the pope, who occupies Chair of Peter, cannot be judged by the Church one can scarcely find at this early a period of Church history.

[14] He is also venerated by the Catholic Church on Feb. 5.

[15] Mansi 8.284, http://mansi.fscire.it/immagine/4552, quoted in *See of St. Peter*, by Allies, 93 (emphasis added).

[16] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 333 (emphasis added).

[17] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from*

The late Williston Walker (1860–1922), former professor of Church History at Yale University, notes how St. Ennodius "urged that the pope can be judged by God alone" and that the "later claims of the medieval papacy were, therefore, *sketched by the beginning of the sixth century*."[18]

Most students of Church history are aware of these sorts of papal claims coming out from the eleventh century. But this principle, according to Fr. Klaus Schatz, had already been "*known and effective long before that*."[19] While not precisely saying "The First See is judged by none," St. Gelasius already proposed the concept.[20] In his famous letter to Faustus defending the judgment of his predecessor, Felix III, against Eastern accusations of malpractice in condemning Acacius, St. Gelasius writes: "By which tradition of our ancestors do they call the apostolic see to judgement?"[21] For St. Gelasius, "everyone can appeal to the pope, but there is no appeal beyond him, 'and thus he judges the whole Church and *himself stands before no tribunal*, and no judgment can be passed on his judgment, nor can his decision be abrogated.'"[22] Obviously, he looked into Christian antiquity and could not find a basis upon which to judge a pope by a council.

Aside from there being no known reason to question the authenticity of the writings cited above concerning the pontificate of St. Symmachus, it was at this time that several documents were most likely forged in order to influence victory over Laurentius.[23] While there are strong reasons to hold these writings as forgeries, it seems altogether absurd if the forgers were ready to introduce a concept never heard of before. How could anyone expect such a claim to have any credibility if there was

---

*Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311–600* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 325 (emphasis added).

[18] Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. Robert T. Handy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 124.

[19] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 73 (emphasis added).

[20] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 132 (emphasis added).

[21] Gelasius, Letter 10, in *Letters of Gelasius I (492–496): Micro-Manager and Pastor of the Church of Rome*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2014), 112.

[22] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 73; he cites the letter of Gelasius to Faustus in Constantinople, *PL* 59.28B, see n41 (emphasis added).

[23] George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), 111–13; here is reviewed (1) *Gesta Liberii*, (2) *Synodi sinuessanae gesta*, (3) *Constitutio Silvestri*, and (4) *Gesta de Xysti purgatione*.

not, at the very least, something undergirding it in the well accepted tradition? Even the supporters of Laurentius composed what appear to be forgeries with which to oppose St. Symmachus, and the content of those are also an attempt to bolster a tradition already widely known.[24] It is clear these persons did not invent their claims *ex nihilo* but were nevertheless fabricating the past in search of a way to make their arguments more persuasive.

For this reason, the forgeries were probably only there to make "beyond all shadow of doubt" some content that was generally already received, or largely known as a considerable opinion. That the pope cannot be judged by any earthly court, as Fr. Klaus Schatz stated, was brand new in that particular "bold formulation," but not new in its "content."[25] Once again, the basic idea was already proclaimed during the Gelasian pontificate.[26]

Walter Ullmann commented on how unnecessary the Symmachian forgeries were since, the "forger had at his disposal a perfectly genuine statement by Gelasius."[27] What did these Symmachian forgeries seek to achieve if their basic idea was already known? In addition to piling on evidence to compel audiences to disfavor the synodal examinations of St. Symmachus, it was through these forgeries that "the principle entered the legal canon."[28] Going from an already firmly held concept to a legal form is not, after all, a transition from nothing to something. And it should not be forgotten that St. Avitus and St. Ennodius were presenting the basic idea that the pope cannot be judged and based it on divine Revelation and ecclesiastical tradition.

Were these saints liars? Even if what they said were untrue, they were claiming what they understood to be traditional. Also, if this concept of the First See being judged by no one were a complete novelty fabricated from pure lies hatched within the years 499–503, then that would mean these saintly bishops who defended St. Symmachus, including the saintly

[24] See W. T. Townsend, "The So-Called Symmachian Forgeries," *The Journal of Religion* 13.2 (April 1933), 165–74.

[25] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 73.

[26] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 73.

[27] Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1955), 27n6. In fact, in another work, Ullmann mentions how the authors of the Symmachian forgeries should not have bothered adding false information since there was authentic material to use from the pontificates of Popes St. Zosimus (418) and St. Boniface (422). See Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, 18 and 39.

[28] Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, 27n6.

pope himself, were ready to stake their whole faith on it and risk being heretics for it. That seems very unlikely, especially in light of how the concept became rooted, at least, in Western consciousness.

Out of everything examined from the Laurentian Schism, perhaps the most interesting feature is this late fifth century argument that the pope cannot be judged by any human court. Admittedly, this would appear to be a difficult position to hold. It would almost seem as if their ecclesial principles were going to allow the church to have to endure with a monster of a pope and do nothing about it. Of course, while the Church traditionally never embraced an absolutized teaching of papal immunity which allowed for no exceptions, not being able to judge, even generally, this doctrine of the First See still appears to be a tough pill to swallow.[39]

[39] Christian D. Washburn, "St. Robert Bellarmine, Conciliarism, and the Limits of Papal Power," *Perichoresis* 18.6 (2020): 21–40, DOI: 10.2478/perc-2020-0033.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

# The Papacy and Emperor Justinian

To RETURN TO THE EARLY sixth century, we should look at some of the most explicit acceptances of papal primacy by the Emperor Justinian (482–565), who succeeded his uncle Justin in 527. Having a clear vision to fulfill the mission of Constantine the Great, Justinian sought to unify the whole Roman Empire under one diarchic regime of Church and state wedded together in a glorious symphony. This explains his actions when he was operating under his uncle to bring the Eastern churches into submission to Pope St. Hormisdas through the *Formula*. It explains other doctrinal projects, which sought to earn the respect of the ultra-Cyrillian Miaphysites in Egypt, Syria, Armenia, and Palestine, who were Christians that still did not accept Chalcedon (451). Having such a vision also came with ruling as the emperor of the realm, which involved the role of being lawmaker. The body of law that Justinian is famous for producing is broadly entitled *Corpus Juris Civilis* and is comprised of four parts: (1) Institutes, (2) Code, (3) Digest, and (4) Novels.[1]

[1] Charles M. Radding and Antonio Ciaralli, *The Corpus Iuris Civilis in the Middle Ages: Manuscripts and Transmission from the Sixth Century to the Juristic Revival* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 36; F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2002), 33. See brief outline of the history in *History of the Byzantine State*, by George Ostrogorsky, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 75–77; Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: A Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 72.

One section of the Code of Justinian includes an exchange of letters concerning the Theopaschite formula (One in the Trinity suffered) with Pope John II (533–535). While it may seem odd for Justinian to have put letters into the form of law, they were included "because it grants papal sanction to Justinian's formula."[2] Adding the letters of the pope of Rome was a way to show pristine credibility and Roman universality, meaning both Old and New Rome. In the opening of Pope John II's letter to Justinian, which was inserted into the Code, we read the following:

> Among the conspicuous reasons for praising your wisdom and gentleness, Most Christian of Emperors, and one which radiates light as a star, is the fact that through love of the Faith, and actuated by zeal for charity, you, learned in ecclesiastical discipline, have preserved reverence for the See of Rome, and have *subjected all things to its authority*, and have *given it unity*. The following precept was communicated to its founder, that is to say, the first of the Apostles, by the mouth of the Lord, namely: "Feed my lambs." *This See is indeed the head of all churches*, as the rules of the Fathers and the decrees of Emperors assert, and the words of your most reverend piety testify.[3]

The rest goes on to praise the emperor for his orthodox faith and solicitous care for the state of the Church and empire. Then, just after this, the Code inserts a response letter from Justinian to the pope. In this letter, we read:

> We hasten to bring to the knowledge of Your Holiness everything relating to the condition of the Church, as We have always had the greatest desire to preserve the unity of your Apostolic See, and the condition of the Holy Churches of God, as they exist at the present time, that they may remain without disturbance or opposition. Therefore, We have exerted Ourselves *to unite all the priests of the East*

[2] George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), 123.

[3] *Code of Justinian*, I.1.4 from *The Civil Law, Including the Twelve Tables, the Institutes of Gauis, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo*, trans. and ed. Samuel P. Scott (Cincinnati: Central Trust, 1932), https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ1_Scott.htm#1.

> *and subject them to the See of Your Holiness*, and hence the questions which have at present arisen, although they are manifest and free from doubt, and, *according to the doctrine of your Apostolic See, are constantly firmly observed and preached by all priests*, We have still considered it necessary that they should be brought to the attention of Your Holiness. For we do not suffer anything which has reference to the state of the Church, even though what causes the difficulty may be clear and free from doubt, to be discussed *without being brought to the notice of Your Holiness*, because *you are the head of all the Holy Churches*, for We shall exert Ourselves in every way (as has already been stated), to increase the honor and authority of your See.[4]

The statements here by Justinian made it clear that he understood the Roman See to be the head of all the churches and that he possessed jurisdiction over the whole Church. However, this should also be read in light of his bold proclamation that the church of Constantinople (New Rome) is head of all other churches despite Old Rome being the head of all the churches entirely. Moreover, from the disputes we see breaking out over the Three Chapters controversy and the Council of Constantinople (553), it becomes clear that Justinian was willing to neutralize the pope in order to advance his own ends by other means. The level of loyalty to papal authority would appear to be, therefore, somewhat politically orchestrated. Greek Orthodox historian George Demacopoulos, seeking to read Justinian's policy from a bird's eye view, understands that the emperor "endorsed the rhetorical claims of the See of Rome . . . *to advance his own causes*," and that his "legislation affirms the papacy's most ambitious claims and simultaneously undermines those claims."[5] For Demacopoulos, Justinian gives explicit acceptance of these claims in writing but not as an "endorsement of a specific ecclesiological view," and that this only showed "the emperor's willingness to do whatever was necessary to build a theological consensus."[6] Again, a political agenda.

Justinian was not just the emperor of the Roman Empire, but he was also well trained in theology. It was his Christological works that ended up being pushed into a process of acceptance in the East during the

[4] *Code of Justinian*, I.1.4 from *The Civil Law*, trans. and ed. Scott, https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ1_Scott.htm#1.

[5] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 116.

[6] Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 125.

famous Three Chapters controversy. This controversy was, strictly speaking, about digging the memory of three men out of their graves in order to place anathema on them or their writings. By doing so, the Byzantine Church sought to make it clear they have accepted the Christology of St. Cyril of Alexandria. The goal of this was to give an olive branch to the non-Chalcedonian Miaphysites in the East. As it turns out, this attempt at rapprochement ended up locking the horns of the emperor and the pope. Therefore, while Justinian deferred to Old Rome as the universal head of the churches, the "summit of the sovereign pontificate,"[7] the "source of the priesthood," and even enforced the *Libellus Hormisdae* over the entire East, he also took a route which undermined papal authority if it meant a greater political good in his perspective. This will be seen most explicitly in the events detailed below on Justinian's policy under the pontificate of Pope Vigilius.

One episode which seems worth mentioning before moving forward concerns the appearance of Pope St. Agapetus (535–536), who is venerated by the Orthodox (April 17), in Constantinople for political business. While he was there, the Constantinopolitan patriarch Anthimus (535–536) had joined with anti-Chalcedonian Severus of Antioch (459–538). Prior to the pope's arrival in Constantinople, there was an effort made by the monks of Constantinople, together with other monastics from the Syria-Secunda and the monasteries of Sabas, to require Anthimus of Constantinople to openly accept Chalcedon (451).[8] When Anthimus refused to do this, they appealed to the pope of Rome to take authoritative action over the matter.[9] These Eastern monastics called upon the Apostolic See of St. Peter to overthrow Severus of Antioch, an anti-Chalcedonian who influenced Anthimus, just like "S. Peter had overthrown Simon Magus,"[10] in their words. They even requested that the pope would enforce a set time limit before which Anthimus would have to publicly profess Chalcedon or be excommunicated, and compared it to what Pope St. Celestine did to Nestorius of Constantinople.[11]

---

7 Novel IX (May 535), as quoted in *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, by Francis Dvornik, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 73.

8 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 349.

9 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 2*, 349.

10 Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 168.

11 Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 168.

When Pope St. Agapetus arrived in Rome, he would not be in fellowship with Anthimus on the grounds that the latter had already been bishop of Trebizond when he was elected to the See of Constantinople, and such episcopal transfers were uncanonical.[12] Subsequently, Anthimus refused to publicly accept Chalcedon under the examination of the pope and resigned his place from the throne of Constantinople,[13] opening the way for the pope to ordain his successor, St. Menas.[14] In order to ensure the victory of the orthodox faith, Pope St. Agapetus required both Justinian and the new patriarch St. Menas to sign an "expanded version"[15] of the Formula of Hormisdas.[16] This act achieved an "admission by the emperor and by the patriarch of Constantinople that Rome had unique competence in defining orthodoxy."[17] This and a subsequent council held in Constantinople (536), which further condemned the anti-Chalcedonians and reaffirmed the orthodoxy of St. Leo's Tome, is further proof that the restoration of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in sixth century Byzantium involved abiding by authoritative interventions by the Apostolic See as well as embracing the Leonine logic of the position of St. Peter's See, vis-à-vis the universal Church.

## The Council of Constantinople II (553)[18]

In attempt to bring unity between the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians (Miaphysites), the Emperor Justinian sought to

[12] Volker L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 197.

[13] Claire Sotinel, "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: The Western View," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 278.

[14] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 616.

[15] J. N. D. Kelly, "Agapitus," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 59; Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, third ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 54.

[16] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 2*, 350.

[17] Sotinel, "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century," 197.

[18] The following section summarizes material from the following: Richard Price, trans., *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters* 3 vols., *TTH* 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 1–108; L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 207–57; Charles Diehl, "Justinian's Government in the East," in *The Cambridge Medieval History: The Rise of the Saracens and the Foundation of the Western Empire*, vol. 2, eds. H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney (London: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 45–49; George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 62–68; John

prove that one could hold to the Chalcedonian confession while also rejecting Nestorian implications. His plan was to enforce an imperial and episcopal condemnation of the certain writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa that were purported to imply Nestorianism, that is, two subsisting persons in the Word made flesh. This compilation of writings came to be put into one literary body entitled *Three Chapters*, that is, under three Heads. Theodore was clearly understood to have transgressed proper Christology, but Theodoret and Ibas, while at one time supportive of Nestorianism, later made clear their adherence to Cyrillian Christology as explained at the Council of Chalcedon (451) and St. Leo's Tome.

These latter two were fully exonerated from all hint of heterodoxy and died in in the peace of the Church's communion. This created a problem. To condemn the Three Chapters was tantamount, especially in the minds of the Western episcopate, to condemning the authors themselves.[19] Just how prudent it would be to parade a public anathema on the Three Chapters, therefore, was a matter that had no consensus by the mid-sixth century. And, despite the fact that the emperors were repeatedly told by the popes of Rome that they should not meddle into the divine affairs of the Church without the approval and authority of bishops, in particular the successor of St. Peter, Justinian took initiative to condemn the Three Chapters and enforce this as an edict over the bishops of the whole realm. On this episode of history, Fr. John Chapman states quite accurately that the "growth of Caesaropapism is apparent, and danger was coming."[20]

As we saw in the review of the fourth century Arian crisis, the Byzantine emperors were seeking to realize the vision of a king who orders

---

Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (London: The Folio Society, 2003; reprint of Penguin Books, 1990), 255–267; Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. Robert T. Handy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 143–44; Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 116–22; Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 119–27; Christopher Dawson, *The Formation of Christendom* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965, repr., San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2008), 263–276; Richard Price and Mary Whitby, eds., *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700* (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 117–132; Fr. John Chapman, O.S.B., *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 44–59; Fr. John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), 228–38; S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 239–248.

[19] Price, Richard, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters*. 3 vols. *TTH* 51. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009. Published as a single-volume paperback edition, with minor corrections, 2012, viii.

[20] Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 228.

the realm unto God. This had the potential to be a great blessing, as even many popes of Rome extolled the faithful emperors. However, it could also bring great harm if the imperial authorities did not abide by the divine authority of the episcopate, and that meant, chiefly, the pope of Rome. Under Justinian, the harmony of the Imperium and the Priesthood was difficult to manage, and when he could afford to take matters into his own hands, he would employ extreme tactics in order to achieve his goal.

This episode begins in 544 with the publication of Justinian's edict requiring all to condemn the Three Chapters, and, "under the usual threat of force,"[21] threatening excommunication to any of the patriarchs of the East who refused to sign. St. Menas (536–552), patriarch of Constantinople, refused to sign at first, "claiming that he had to wait for the pope's decision,"[22] but was ultimately pressured into signing. However, his signature was stated to have a contingent status, namely, "if Vigilius refused to sign, he could withdraw his signature."[23] The patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch both signed, but "only under duress."[24] After protesting, and being threatened by deposition,[25] the patriarch of Jerusalem also signed. Eventually, Zolius, the patriarch of Alexandria, sent messengers to Vigilius stating that his signature was done under threat. Further along in the controversy, he fully withdrew his signature,[26] and was, by imperial authority, "unfrocked and exiled"[27] and "replaced by a more pliant patriarch,"[28] one named Apollinaris.[29] The zeal with which the emperor moved to clarify doctrine was commendable, but it is difficult to ignore the transgression of the laws of the Church committed by Justinian, who was now showing blatant signs of Caesaropapism.

Because the edict was publicly condemning the writings of Ibas and Theodoret, many bishops, particularly the entire West, saw it as an attack on the authority of Chalcedon, since the latter had both exonerated and received these two men. The Western episcopate would stand against it, and we see writings coming from North Africa that testify to the difficulty

[21] Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, 120.
[22] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 23.
[23] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 23.
[24] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 23.
[25] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 235.
[26] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 235–36.
[27] Fr. Asterios Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great: The Emperor and Saint* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982), 114.
[28] Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, 120.
[29] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 163.

that the Three Chapters Edict presented for those loyal to Chalcedon. Of course, Pope Vigilius refused to sign on. Consequently, he was "abducted from Rome and subjected to intense pressure at Constantinople."[30]

From this point, despite the irregularity of the imperial initiative, the Three Chapters controversy would prove to humiliate the bishop of Rome and the papacy. Upon arrival, Vigilius had excommunicated all the patriarchs who signed the edict.[31] After considering the matter further, Vigilius eventually withdrew his excommunications and even changed his mind to support the edict. This came with the publication of his first document, the *Judicatum*, which condemned the Three Chapters. The Western episcopate responded with a bold rejection, and many went so far as to remove Vigilius from the diptychs of their altars. In what appears to be a thought-provoking act, "the general synod of African bishops broke completely from communion with the pope until he agreed to withdraw his Judicatum."[32] A rare moment where bishops credit true doctrine over and against the pope.

One of the most significant documents illustrating Western opposition to the imperial edict comes from a North African deacon and disciple of Fulgentius of Ruspe (462–533),[33] Ferrandus of Carthage. A "famous canonist," Ferrandus was vehemently concerned for the defense of the Council of Chalcedon, in light of what he saw as a threat to it by the condemnation Ibas and Theodoret. To make matters worse, the one document authored by Ibas was a letter to a certain Persian named Mari which included some statements in favor of Theodore of Mopsuestia (according to Price),[34] but was nevertheless acceptable in one place of the *Acts* of the Council of Chalcedon. This is a significant point in the controversy. As Fr. Richard Price described, to condemn the Three Chapters was equal, in Western eyes, to condemning Chalcedon as a whole.[35] A certain letter of Ferrandus affords a great deal of information on how the sixth century episcopate understood the nature and norms for

[30] Markus, "Popes and Emperors," in *The Papacy*, eds. Paul Johnson and Michael Walsh (London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997), 50.

[31] Menas of Constantinople returned the favor by removing Vigilius's name from his diptychs; see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 236.

[32] Robert Browning, *Justinian and Theodora* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 147. One simply cannot look at this and fail to wonder about what sort of papal doctrine these African bishops held to in terms of the necessity of the communion of Rome. It is a worthy consideration.

[33] Venerated by the Eastern Orthodox, Jan 1.

[34] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 76.

[35] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 76.

ecumenical councils. In a letter to Pelagius, a Roman deacon,[36] Ferrandus argued for the absolute irreformability of the Council of Chalcedon.[37] This shows the Western concern over the Three Chapters. Ferrandus's effort here was to prove that ecumenical councils are irreformable and cannot be revised later. In order to emphasize the finality of the council, he added a description of what contribution was given by the legates of the Apostolic See:

> Where would he have found greater judges in the church, when he had in front of him in its legates the apostolic see itself, *whose assent gave to whatever the synod defined invincible strength*?[38]

This is a bold statement which calls into question just what the "assent" of the "apostolic see" adds to the rest of the bishops who assent to a council's decree. Somehow Ferrandus was thinking "invincible strength." Elsewhere in the letter, Ferrandus points out that the cooperation of the other patriarchs also supplied the council with its strength: "Present there in its legates was the apostolic see that holds the primacy of the universal church; present there were the pontiffs of other venerable sees."[39] Therefore, a true ecumenical council is not one had with absolute papal isolation. Further, he goes on to give a more definitive statement on the nature of councils:

> General councils, particularly those that have gained the assent of the Roman church, hold a place of authority second only to the canonical books. . . . What has been concluded by the judgment of holy bishops and most carefully tested and confirmed by being taken to the memoria of the blessed {Peter}[40] must be followed and must be embraced;

---

[36] He would later succeed Vigilius to the supreme pontificate.

[37] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 113.

[38] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 117. Fr. John Chapman translates slightly differently: "*The Apostolic see, by the consent of which, whatever that synod* (Chalcedon) *defined, has received invincible strength*" (*PL* 67.925, translated by John Chapman in *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905), 115. This matches the Innocentian principle relayed to the North Africans during the Pelagian controversy, namely, that the Carthaginian synods needed to refer to the Apostolic See in order to have their decrees strengthened and finalized.

[39] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 116.

[40] Price notes (*The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 118n38) that this was a

> they ought not to be subjected to revision through any pretext of piety.[41]

And lastly:

> For it is considered sufficient for full confirmation if the decrees when brought to the notice of the whole church cause no offense or scandal to the brethren, but are shown to agree with the apostolic faith *when confirmed by the assent of the apostolic see.*[42]

So this sixth century African, known for his expertise in canon law, understood that the Apostolic See has an essential role in the fortification of councils as infallible and irreformable. That is simply a perfect echo of the Innocentian principle laid down by Pope St. Innocent to North Africa during the Pelagian controversy. Surprisingly, he says that ecumenical councils, once confirmed by the pope, are just underneath the authority of the canonical books of the Holy Scriptures.[43] Despite what Ferrandus says about the essential role of the See of Peter in the confirmation of councils, the North Africans supported the excommunication

manual addition by *PL* ad loc and that the *Memoria of Peter* was St. Peter's shrine on Vatican Hill. In *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, ed. Raymond Davis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 3, it is recorded that Pope Anicetus (152–160) "built and set in order a memorial-shrine to the blessed Peter, where the bishops [of Rome] might be buried" (Thomas J. Craughwell, *St. Peter's Bones: How the Relics of the First Pope were Lost and Found . . . and then Lost and Found Again* [New York: Image, 2013], 12); J. N. D. Kelly notes how *Liber Pontificalis* describes this for Anacletus, but it was "probably Anicetus" and that the shrine was "familiar to visitors c. 200 and which was revealed by the 1939–49 excavations" (see "Anicetus," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 11). It is quite likely that Ferrandus here means that the decrees of councils have to be confirmed by the authority of Rome as the See of St. Peter; see George Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 34–35, for information on the connection between Peter's cult in both his tomb and the *Memoria Apostolorum* on the *Via Appia*, or shrine on Vatican Hill. Also Henry Chadwick, "St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome: The Problem of the Memoria Apostolorum Ad Catacumbas," in *Henry Chadwick: Selected Writings*, ed. William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 126–48. However, if the text means "taken to the memory of the blessed," it is quite difficult to know precisely what Ferrandus intended.

[41] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 118 (emphasis added).

[42] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 120 (emphasis added).

[43] Price and Whitby, eds., *Chalcedon in Context*, 89. See also the distinction between "canonical books" and "General Councils" to confirm that canonical books are not referring to the ecclesiastical canons in *The See of St. Peter, The Rock of the Church, The Source of Jurisdiction, and Centre of Unity*, by Thomas William Allies (London: Burns & Lambert, 1850), 131.

of Pope Vigilius when news of his *judicatum* was released.[44] The pope then revoked it in light of the controversy it stirred up in the West. While Vigilius insisted that his decree did not nullify Chalcedon, "there could be no doubt that his anathemas had dangerously undermined the authority of Chalcedon; and the pope was now generally reviled throughout Western Christendom as a turncoat and apostate."[45] The Churches of Illyricum, Dalmatia, and Africa were some of the first to respond with public opposition to the Three Chapters Edict.

As an alternative to the *judicatum*, both Justinian and Vigilius agreed that the issue would have to be reserved for the examination of an ecumenical council. However, the Western sees were not cooperative, seeing this whole event as a Caesaropapist agenda. Reparatus, bishop of Carthage, was deposed for being uncooperative and replaced by Justinian.[46] The bishops of Illyricum also refused to come to the proposed council.[47] However, Justinian grew impatient and, "as if he himself were a one-man ecumenical council,"[48] published a second edict *On the Orthodox Faith*, which was a balanced treatise on Chalcedonian-Cyrillian Christology and a defense of posthumous anathematization.[49] This second edict was interpreted by Vigilius as a betrayal of the ōriginal plan[50] of a worldwide council and "an interference with the proceedings of the council before it took place."[51]

Although this second edict was orthodox, Vigilius wrote a document of excommunication toward its subscribers. This included excommunicating St. Menas of Constantinople and issuing a tentative deposition and excommunication for a Theodore Ascidas[52] as well as others. Consequently, this caused further friction between pope and emperor. In the

[44] Reparatus, bishop of Carthage, held a synod wherein they excommunicated the pope; see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 237. It is interesting that Ferrandus, representing North African canon law, situated Rome as essential to the final ratification of the Church's councils but did not think that this made a particular pope immune from heresy or from being excluded from communion.

[45] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, 256.

[46] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 237. In a letter from the Church of Milan, the bishops from there expressed that the deposition of Reparatus was illegal, and against all the canons of the Church; see Price, *Acts of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 167.

[47] Price, *Acts of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 167.

[48] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, 263.

[49] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 24–25.

[50] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 27.

[51] Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate*, 64.

[52] According to Vigilius, this man was a primary influence in the development of the second edict.

meantime, Vigilius, out of fear of being taken into the stricter custody of the emperor, escaped to the Church of St. Peter in the Hormisdas Palace. While there, imperial officials came in and forced him out, and he was physically returned to the Placidia Palace, where the emperor had closer surveillance of him. However, he managed to escape to the church of St. Euphemia in the city of Chalcedon. He then wrote his famous encyclical, *Dum in Sanctae Euphamiae*, addressed "to the whole people of God,"[53] which includes a warning to everyone who signs on to this second edict that they would be disciplined with suspension by the power and authority of St. Peter,[54] and published the document which deposed Theodore and excommunicated St. Menas. Once again, the pope was at terrible odds with both emperor and patriarchs:

> If by any chance—perish the thought—you do this, then consider yourselves from that very moment excommunicated as heretics by the See of the Blessed Apostle Peter, *whose voice I am.*[55]

What was the reaction to this? This bold disciplinary decree of the pope caused Justinian to take greater precaution in pacifying the situation and proceeding to the best possible outcome. After Vigilius's letter was published,[56] Eastern bishops who were excommunicated by the pope,[57] including St. Menas of Constantinople, traveled to stand before the face of Vigilius in the church of St. Euphemia in 552 to "make honourable amends to the pope,"[58] as well as to "apologize and humble themselves before Vigilius."[59] Having been technically excluded from the pope's com-

---

[53] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 170.

[54] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 171. Later on in the same letter, Vigilius goes on to describe how the Roman See, through Peter and the Apostles, receives the charge to feed Christ's sheep, i.e., the universal Church.

[55] Pope Vigilius, "Encyclical to the Catholic world," as quoted in *Church and State in Early Christianity*, by Hugo Rahner, trans. Leo Donald Davis, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 221.

[56] Included in this publication was the prior document which deposed Theodore Ascidas and excommunicated Menas.

[57] Alongside Menas was Theodore of Caesarea, Andrew of Ephesus, Theodore of Antioch in Pisidia, Peter of Tarsus, and "many others also" (see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 147).

[58] Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*, 149.

[59] John J. Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy* (New York: Random House, 2011), 36.

munion, this was their opportunity to resolve their separation.[60] There, they testified, following the principle given by Ferrandus of Carthage, that they dogmatically upheld those councils, principally Chalcedon, which had been ratified and confirmed by the authority of the Apostolic See, and none other.[61] On the relevant subject of the Three Chapters, they resisted from any position contrary to the pope, and "*concur that all documents of this form should be submitted to your beatitude.*"[62] Consequently, Vigilius's excommunication was lifted from the Eastern bishops, and a way forward was created.[63]

Justinian then returned to the plan for an ecumenical council,[64] and the intention was for Vigilius to preside. However, some parts of the procedure made for a stall in the pope's participation. In light of Western opposition to attending the council and in light of the fact that Western representation would consist in a small number of hand-picked bishops from Illyricum and North Africa, "vetted before departure by the Praetorian Prefect of Africa,"[65] Vigilius offered to settle the Three Chapters question by a select portion of bishops from each patriarchate with himself in a small synod, in order to capture ecumenicity, or rather, what possibility was left for such an attribute. Justinian, knowing that the strength of his position lay with the majority of Eastern bishops, refused such a plan. Vigilius, then, resolved to join the protest against the council altogether, and reserved the matter to himself with his small entourage of bishops.[66]

The council convened in 553, and the imperial officials of Justinian, to no one's shock, laid down the exact process of what would be discussed and decided,[67] which the conciliar bishops followed perfectly. Meanwhile, Vigilius turned to writing what is known as his first *constitutum*, which was meant to be, like the *judicatum*, a papal judgment on

[60] They were dispatched by a "major tactical concession" on the part of the emperor (see Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, 265).

[61] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 146 (emphasis added).

[62] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 146 (emphasis added).

[63] A second profession was made by "Eutychios of Constantinople (successor to Menas), Apollinaris of Alexandria, Domnus of Antioch in Syria, Helias of Thessalonica, and others also," and in this they profess to the same endorsement; see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, 148.

[64] Browning, *Theodora and Justinian*, 149.

[65] Browning, *Theodora and Justinian*, 149.

[66] He was assisted by three Roman deacons and seventeen other bishops; see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 141.

[67] Price, Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 29; see also Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 15–17.

the subject of the Three Chapters, binding upon the whole Church. As Fr. Richard Price observed, this act of the pope proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, a consciousness of authority exceeding that of the council that was in session in Constantinople: "Since at the very same time an ecumenical council was in process of discussing the very same questions, he [Vigilius] implied that his own authority surpassed that of any council."[68]

In this *constitutum*, Vigilius condemned sixty extracts from Theodore of Mopsuestia as heretical but prevented himself of having to enact a posthumous anathematization on the basis of calling into question whether Theodore actually wrote the extracts.[69] On Theodoret, Vigilius limited the matter to the fact that he openly subscribed to the decrees of Chalcedon, signed St. Leo's Tome, anathematized Nestorius, and was received by the Church. Such should be sufficient for the emperor. Concerning Ibas, aside from refuting charges that his letter to Mari taught Nestorianism, the *constitutum* stated that the Council of Chalcedon identified Ibas's orthodoxy on the basis of said letter, and so that letter should be left alone, lest Chalcedon be called into question.

So the argument went. According to Fr. Price, this *constitutum* was very much orthodox in its aim and fully endorsed the Cyrillian Christology already accepted by Justinian as well as the first four ecumenical councils.[70] It was addressed to the emperor, but it contained a binding and authoritative demand for no one to reform what it decreed about the Three Chapters, in the name and authority of the Apostolic See. Working under this conviction, and not daring to contravene the authority of Chalcedon, Vigilius, in the *constitutum*, forcefully demanded absolutely no reform or revision to the judgment of Ibas's letter, as if to imply that Chalcedon erred in accepting it.[71]

In response to this, Justinian ordered the council, then in session, to enact certain disciplinary actions against Vigilius, and then to move forward with condemning the Three Chapters in their totality, forbidding anyone from defending them without incurring divine anathema. Vigilius was struck from the diptychs, a sort of excommunication, and was severely criticized for assuming that he could, by himself, "anticipate

[68] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 56 (emphasis added). I'm not confident that this jumps out from the text so clearly.

[69] *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 142.

[70] *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 144.

[71] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 205, paragraph 283.

the judgment of the Church in her totality, *since each person needs the help of his neighbor.*"[72]

The pope was accused of not cooperating with the council. Because of this, the council is, out of all the great seven of the first millennium, the most challenging to papal prerogatives. Even the late Fr. Francis Sullivan, S.J., once renowned theologian and professor of ecclesiology at the Gregorian University in Rome, states that this council "could hardly have more strongly expressed its rejection of the papal claim to definitive teaching authority."[73] Though, in a peculiar manner, they made sure to separate the person in the office of the bishop of Rome from the office itself. Whatever was going to happen to Vigilius, the council, specifically by order of the emperor, was going to make sure it retained the communion of the Apostolic See and thus the Chair of St. Peter. All this, despite suspending Vigilius from communion. The significance of this should become apparent when we recall the status of the Apostolic See in Justinian's Code, and in the previous ecumenical councils. It is also to be contrasted with what the Greek bishops did in the second millennium beginning with Constantinople's removal of the popes of Rome from the diptychs. None of the Eastern patriarchs in the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, like Justinian, maintained unity with the Apostolic See while removing a particular pope's name from their diptychs. I think the contrast is significant, as it shows Justinian was aware that the Roman communion must be maintained.

The council closed and issued its imperially mandated anathema of the Three Chapters. It would be about six months before the aged Vigilius, who had more time to think and study on the matter, changed his view and subscribed fully to the condemnation of the Three Chapters, even citing the example of St. Augustine in his retractations as a precedent for when one needs to correct his former errors in light of further study. Or "Justinian forced him to give way."[74] From this, he issued a letter of agreement to the patriarch of Constantinople, St. Eutychios, and a second *constitutum* wherein he fully ratified to the council's decision on his own authority,[75] thereby giving full papal ratification to its decrees.

---

[72] *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2, 111, paragraph 5.

[73] Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 69.

[74] James Allan Evans, *The Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Empire* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), xxxiv.

[75] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, vol. 1, 57.

In return, Justinian had the portions of the council's *Acts* which condemned Vigilius removed from the finalized version.[76]

How, then, does a Catholic who adheres to the First Vatican Council deal with these historical events? From all appearances, it looks as if a perfect testing ground was built to see the charism of papal infallibility on trial, and it ended in one huge public failure.

There is some irony in all of this, however. The bishops at the council accused Vigilius of anticipating "the judgment of the Church" without their council, all the while being complicit with the Caesaropapist methodology of Emperor Justinian. The emperor was practically acting like a one-man ecumenical council, enforcing his own theological decrees upon the universal Church and on pain of excommunication or exile for any and all who disobeyed. In other words, Pope Vigilius was accused of not acting in a conciliar manner, but the whole Three Chapters

[76] Fr. Richard Price notes in a section on "Texts and Versions" that the deletion of Vigilius's name from the diptychs was removed from the record of the seventh session of the *Acts of the Council*. This was done by the order of Justinian in consequence of the pope bending to his will. This would make much sense because in later centuries, the story of Vigilius does not come up when a papal failure is recalled (see Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 1, 104). Fr. Asterios Gerostergios reports that Justinian ordered the parts of the council critical of Vigilius to be removed so that the council appeared as though the pope, emperor, and the bishops were all in one accord. Presumably it would have looked terrible to keep such tension on the record (*Justinian the Great*, 144). Both Gerostergios and Price rely on the same source, Evangelos Chrysos, *Η εκκλησιαστικη πολιτικη του Ιουστινιανου: κατα την εριν περι τα τρια κεφαλαια και την Ε' Οικουμενικην Συνοδον* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1969), 145–99. [English translation of title: *The Ecclesiastical Policy of Justinian in the Dispute Concerning the Three Chapters and the Fifth Ecumenical Council.*] Gerostergios himself writes: "Thus, by order of Justinian, passages were deleted, particularly those passages that were critical of Vigilius personally. The new form of the acts, with the deletion and addition of words and sentences, gave the impression that Vigilius, with the approval of the Emperor and the Synod, did not participate in the Synod, and that after the work of the Synod was completed, he issued the Second Constitutum confirming its decisions, as though it had been planned that way. Vigilius took these elaborated acts with him" (*Justinian the Great*, 144). And Gerostergios summarizes the research of Evangelos Chrysos: "From the original Greek acts of the fifth Ecumenical synod, only some parts have been preserved. The Latin translations of the acts has been preserved in two forms: a shorter form (codex *Sangellensis*, 672), and an extended form (codex *Parisinus Latinus*, 16832). Researches have shown that the extended form came from the translation of the original acts of the Synod made immediately after the Synod. The shorter form came from the correction of the extended form, which Pope Vigilius received on his return to Italy, and which he could use against the opposition in the West" (*Justinian the Great*, 272n272). In my own personal correspondence with Chrysos, he confirmed to me that the two Latin versions indicate two Greek originals, and these two Greek originals must have been made in Constantinople before Vigilius and Pelagius left Constantinople for Italy, taking with them the shorter version that is processed from the first longer version.

controversy was anything but a conciliar initiative when we consider its inception with the heavy hand of Justinian against patriarchs and bishops. This council, along with events leading up to it, was governed, as even Fr. John Meyendorff admits, under the "force and intimidation"[77] of the emperor, and thus could not possibly pass any test of conciliarism; it was nothing but an effective gathering under his thumb. As Eamon Duffy noted, in Justinian's perspective, it was he who was possessed with power over the whole Church rather than the bishops or the pope.[78]

Justinian, as already mentioned, took it upon himself to depose and replace the Alexandrian patriarch in order to secure Egyptian compliance, but this fate also fell to the archbishop of Carthage and the patriarch of Jerusalem.[79] The council held in 553 also does not seem to have understood that, by lacking the representation of the entire West, *they themselves* were anticipating the judgment of the "whole" church by its willful submission to the agenda predetermined by the emperor.

On top of this, in the work leading up to the council, as shown by Ferrandus of Carthage and the Eastern bishops, it was well testified that councils are not truly "ecumenical" until they have both the common consent of the bishops as well as the singular privilege of the Apostolic See in ratifying its decrees. And yet, here in this council the Eastern bishops thought it fine to obey the imperial command of removing Vigilius's name from the diptychs and proceeded to finish the council without the cooperation, much less the approval, of the pope! If this episode of history displays a papal failure, it is equally true that it displays a council breaking the rules governing councils. That is, unless one defines the "rule of councils" differently than how the near consensus of the Fathers in both East and West would come to agree upon it.

For instance, as it was said by the fifth century Greek historian, Socrates Scholasticus, "Ecclesiastical canon commands that the churches *shall not make any ordinances against the opinion of the bishop of Rome*."[80] In addition, if we can proleptically apply a future council's wisdom, it was stated aloud at the Seventh Council in Nicaea (787) that the

---

[77] John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 240.

[78] Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 58.

[79] W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 1984), 852.

[80] Socrates Scholasticus, *Church History* 2.8, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. A. C. Zenos (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26012.htm (emphasis added).

"cooperation of the pope of Rome" is "*the rule* (νομος) *for councils.*"[81] How was Constantinople (553) not a violation of that rule? Moreover, it was Justinian himself who said, in a letter to the Patriarch Epiphanius,[82] that nothing "concerning the ecclesiastical order" should be "left out of relation to the holiness of that Church [Rome], since it is the *head of all* the most holy priests of God, and since, each time that heretics have arisen among us, *it is by a sentence and right judgment of that venerable see that they have been condemned.*"[83] In his Seventeenth Novel, Justinian included the Constitution of Valentinian III (445), which legally forbade "any unauthorized act *contrary to the authority of that* [Roman] *See.*"[84] It is for this reason that Justinian kept hold of Vigilius under arrest in Constantinople until he condemned the Three Chapters, so as to ensure the achievement of ecumenical status for his council.[85] In other words, even in an effort to man-handle the authority of the papacy, its vital role in Church politics shows itself.

In consequence of his first *constitutum*, the pope was confined "on the island of Proconnesos in the Sea of Marmara on a diet of bread and water."[86] After six months of this, Vigilius capitulated and condemned the Three Chapters. However, there is no statement that he ratified the council as if the council had its own legitimate standing, but rather he "took over its decrees and issued them *in his own name*"[87] and with his own power to anathematize by the power and authority of the Apostolic See. Despite all the political maneuvering and public humiliation

[81] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 442 (emphasis mine).

[82] Thereby showing that this language was not used only to flatter Rome in times when the East needed her help.

[83] *Codex Justiniani* 1.1.7, in *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, second edition, by Aiden Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 212 (emphasis added).

[84] Leo, Epistle 11, in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating of the History of the Church, AD 337-461*, ed. J. Stevenson, rev. W. H. C. Frend (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966), 328; Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian: A Translation with Commentary, Glossary, and Bibliography* (Union: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2001), 530 (emphasis added).

[85] Prior to the pope's ratification, the Council of Constantinople (553) couldn't hope to be counted ecumenical.

[86] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 177.

[87] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, vol. 2, 57; Jalland says the pope met the demands of Justinian "without actually confirming the council" (*The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944], 250). However, that he confirmed the council is implied even if he took over its authority in order to put their decrees into force.

of papal authority, its normative institution remained visible in and through all the smoke by this recognition that without the consent of the Apostolic See, due to its singular privilege, decrees of councils cannot be considered finalized. That principle remained visible after even after all the dust settled.

It will be worth circling back to the observed irony of the council whose bishops were accusing the pope of attempting to define doctrine by himself in the name of collegiality. Caesaropapism is a poor replacement for Roman papism. As Byzantinist historian Judith Herrin observed, the "council of 553 thus represents a hollow triumph of *political* intrigue and *imperial intervention*."[88] Once again, there was the war between the papal versus royal supremacies, with the conciliar episcopate stuck in the middle. That does not scream the kind of conciliarism that the Orthodox Church or the Catholic Church seek to achieve today. As to whether Justinian's council exhibited the principles of conciliarism and consensus that were exemplified in the Acts of the Apostles at the Council of Jerusalem (49), where everyone said, "It seems good to us and the Holy Spirit," *we can safely answer in the negative.*

We could only answer in the positive if we forget that the emperor alone took the initiative, and that he threatened the entire hierarchy with deposition and exile for noncompliance, removed noncompliant bishops, and further restricted Western representation at the council drastically. Just imagine if it were the pope who decided to single handedly write an edict against the Three Chapters, and, like Justinian, used every means necessary to force all the bishops to agree with it, whether by threat of deposition, exile, or excommunication. The world would never cease to talk of how abusive such a pope would be to do so. What makes it acceptable for the emperor?

In particular, the precise means that Justinian took in his efforts to secure submission raise all kinds of canonical questions. As a council, "the meeting was flawed,"[89] since it had the limit of being simply "Justinian's assembly,"[90] promulgating his own doctrinal edict, attempting to have "rubber-stamped what was already imperial policy."[91] Not only the patriarch of Alexandria but also the patriarch of Jerusalem was put under pressure after initially resisting the imperial edict, but eventually

[88] Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, 124.

[89] Paul Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 89.

[90] Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church*, 89.

[91] Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church*, 89.

gave way.[92] The North African bishop, Victor of Tunnuna, who was also a chronicler of the Three Chapters controversy, reports that Justinian exiled Fortinus, metropolitan of Salona (Illyria), and had African dissidents to the council likewise exiled.[93] Out of all the councils, says Anglican historian Paul Valliere, this one "was the creature of the emperor who called it."[94] In light of all this, it is appropriate to reconsider how "official" the public decrees were from Pope Vigilius for which history has knocked him down. One Italian historian, Paolo Brezzi, neatly summarizes the atmosphere of the Fifth Ecumenical Council:

> After the narration of the preceding events all observations would seem superfluous, since the methods and the effects of Caesaropapism speak clearly for themselves. These were the "most Christian" emperors who did not hesitate to depose some popes, jail others, establish dogmatic formulae, set up rites which were more to their liking. Even when they did not reach such extremes, relations between Church and State in that particular period were *not conducted according to justice and equity.*[95]

One lesson to be learned from all of this is that not everything performed in a council is resplendent with activity that shows forth perfectly the faith of the Church. Out of a desire to remain consistent, however, something should be said to the retort from many academics that the papal West could not point fingers at Caesaropapism since she herself utilized imperial force to implement its own wishes on the Church. No blame is to be directed toward the theoretical structure of the symphony between Church and state in the promulgation of the Christian religion. Popes and bishops were readily prepared to rely on the imperium for both the inauguration of councils, their implementation, and the proactive shunning of false religion. However, the perfect balance of this symphony can be razor thin, leaving it quite easy to lose its balance. When Constantius II (337–361) stood behind the cause for the semi-Arians, this was a disregard for the authentic magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church. When Theodosius II stood behind

[92] Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great*, 114–15.

[93] Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great*, 144–45.

[94] Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church*, 89.

[95] Paolo Brezzi, *The Papacy: Its Origins and Historical Evolution*, trans. Henry J. Yannone (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1958), 65.

Eutyches, this was a disregard for the same. When Basiliscus and Zeno stood behind the anti-Chalcedonian cause (or at least the *Henotikon*), it was the same error. Both the manner and methodology of Justinian were bound to create a mess since the authentic magisterium of the Church was not duly observed.[96] We can see a certain habit of the emperors of Byzantium. As a doctrinal dispute arose, according to Monsignor Duchesne, the emperor "called it before him, and studied it with his theological advisers. In due time an imperial edict appeared to which the question was carefully discussed and finally decided in definite terms. The document was then sent to the patriarchs, who expressed their views in conformity with it and repeated the imperial anathemas. *After which the faithful had only to obey.*"[97]

Be that as it may, there remain three strikingly difficult facts that surround the events of this council that considerably challenge the Catholic doctrine of the papacy. *First*, the bishops of the council thought they could oppose the pope and issue a sentence of excommunication. With no small difficulty, a Catholic may say to this that all throughout the centuries, even past the Greek and Latin schism, Catholic theologians and canonists have commented on at least the slight possibility of a heretical pope and how he would be recognized as *alienating himself* from his own place in the Church, which is what the Council of 553 accused the pope of doing. *Secondly*, Vigilius's first *constitutum* has a powerful decree forbidding anyone to condemn the letter of Ibas to Mari, since Chalcedon's "acceptance" of it as orthodox must be right, and yet it was ultimately rescinded (even condemned) by the pope himself just months later. Here, it must be remembered, Vigilius is a firm holder of the orthodox Christology of the first four ecumenical councils but thought this letter "by Ibas" was reflective of those councils. Then, in his second *constitutum*, he condemns the very same letter as heretical.[98] The error here was not in

[96] Some might argue if Justinian abided by the rules of the Church, neither the Western bishops nor the pope would have come around to agreeing with the condemnation of the Three Chapters, which would have effectively allowed Theodore of Mopsuestia, and the writings of Ibas and Mari, to be included in the acceptable documents of the Church. As unhappy as that sounds, the ends do not justify the means. If the tables were turned and the pope single-handedly enforced correct doctrine without a council, would we justify the means in light of the end?

[97] Louis Duchesne, *L'Eglise au VIe siècle* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1925) in Christopher Dawson, *The Formation of Christendom* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965, repr., San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2008), 265–66 (emphasis added).

[98] Vigilius was operating from the common understanding that everything accepted in the *Acts* of an ecumenical council is perfect and infallible. Consequently, he understood that

Vigilius's own doctrinal position since his motive was to defend the integrity of the Council of Chalcedon and its dyophysite theology, but rather a factual error in mistaking Chalcedon to have accepted the condemnable letter addressed to Mari the Persian.[99] *Lastly*, not only did the council proceed to remove Vigilius from communion but also many Churches in the West did the same, albeit for the opposite reason.[100] These Western churches thought the council held in Constantinople was illegitimate since it practically nullified the authority of Chalcedon, and both the pope and the council together protested so many of these churches.

Nevertheless, while both Catholics and Orthodox would say these Western churches were wrong at this time to break fellowship with Rome, it still shows that both East and West were willing to make a move against the pope if he were to deviate from the faith. This might be similar to what Pope Innocent III and St. Robert Bellarmine[101] taught concerning a papal heretic, but there has never been an official recognition of any procedure to remove a pope from communion to this very day in Roman Catholic canon law. It was commonly seen as impossible, as well. As a result, as Fr. Klaus Schatz says, "The problem posed for the papacy by that council [Constantinople 553] has not really been resolved to this day."[102]

But Catholics are not alone in that regard. The council does not carry any special attributes which are kept up by either Catholic or Orthodox principles today. What Orthodox theologian could today write a

---

the letter "of Ibas" that was accepted by Chalcedon's tenth session and used to exonerate Ibas (at least partly) from the charge of heresy was infallible. Therefore, to impugn that very letter would be to impugn the veracity of Chalcedon in part. Vigilius's motive was entirely to protect Chalcedon and dyophysitism. And if part of the council is erroneous, why not its entirety? This is what grounded Vigilius's rejection of condemning the letter "of Ibas." In any case, someone might read the text of the first *constitutum* of Vigilius as supposedly activating what today is called an *ex cathedra* papal pronouncement. An *ex cathedra* decree is with regard to faith and morals.

[99] The Orthodox have the potential to make a strong objection in light of the fact that the authoritative decrees of both *constituta* of Vigilius were both issued from the authority of the Apostolic See and yet contradict one another. For an Orthodox argument, see Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great*, 142–43. For a Catholic response, see Erick Ybarra, *Papal Infallibility and Constituta of Pope Vigilius on Ibas of Edessa*, June 27, 2021, *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/49426689/Papal_Infallibility_and_the_Constituta_of_Pope_Vigilius_on_Ibas_of_Edessa.

[100] These Western bishops defended the Three Chapters and so understood Vigilius's condemnation of them as his own apostasy from the former councils.

[101] Bellarmine spoke to the situation hypothetically, while he himself thought a pope as a formal heretic was impossible; see *De Romano Pontifice On The Roman Pontiff*, vol. 2, trans. Ryan Grant (Post Falls, ID: Mediatrix Press, 2015), 4.6.

[102] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 54 (emphasis added).

treatise on the constitution of ecumenical councils that would match how Constantinople 553 was carried out? The Orthodox have attempted to hold a pan-Orthodox Council in Crete (2016), and the functioning criteria was *consensus*. Justinian employed his military force precisely because he lacked consensus. If, then, the contemporary Orthodox were to mimic the mechanics of the Council of Constantinople, would consensus also be required? Further, what contemporary Orthodox theologian would posit the liceity of imperial pressure threatening the church's whole hierarchy with deposition, and even exile, in the process of executing decrees of a council? Therefore, both Catholics and Orthodox have decisively let go of some of the illegitimacies that went into Justinian's project in 553, however much its decrees were, by papal ratification, finally approved as ecumenical. It may be a council made ecumenical after all the patchwork, but its matter and form are not exemplary for the ideal.[103] The proof of this is simply in how the Roman church struggled to persuade Western sees of its legitimacy. There is no doubt that both the contemporary Orthodox and Catholic Churches can agree on that, at least.

[103] Scholars who have looked into the precise conditions for an ecumenical council almost never find one consistent test for criteria. Some then conclude that there is set criteria and the Church just has to see how things play out as time goes on. If that were true, then there seems to be no basis upon which to speak of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of councils unless one doesn't accept its decrees.

*Chapter Seventeen*

# The Papacy of St. Gregory the Great (594–604)

THE PONTIFICATE OF St. Gregory the Great occupies a special place in the Catholic and Orthodox dialogue concerning the papal primacy, for it is often stated that he emphatically denied the whole concept of a universal pope governing the Church. For such a prominent bishop of Rome to have denied the very concept of a papal jurisdiction over the whole Church would be hurtful to the Catholic side. Does the evidence support this? According to prominent British historian John J. Norwich (1929–2018), St. Gregory is responsible for implanting "in men's minds the idea that the Roman Catholic Church was the most important institution in the world and that the Papacy *was the supreme authority within it.*"[1] Here Norwich merely echoes the seventh century historian St. Bede "the Venerable" (673–735), who recorded that St. Gregory "exercised supreme authority over all the churches of Christendom."[2]

The source material from which it is argued that he rejected universal jurisdiction is from the Gregorian epistles that address the matter of the patriarchs of Constantinople using the title "Ecumenical Patriarch." In

[1] John J. Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy* (New York: Random House, 2011), 49.

[2] Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, rev. R. E. Latham (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1955), 2.1, 94.

his letters, St. Gregory understood this title to entail the patriarch claiming to be *the world's only bishop*, as if the whole globe were his single diocese, reducing all other bishops elsewhere to the status of his presbyters and deacons. How precisely St. Gregory made this connection is not abundantly clear, but some observations are key to getting close to a reliable interpretation. In a letter to John IV "the Faster," the bishop of Constantinople, Pope Gregory forbid him from using the title "Ecumenical Patriarch," and argued that the very concept underneath such a title was contradicted by apostolic foundations. He writes:

> Certainly Peter, the *first of the apostles*, himself a member of the holy and universal Church, Paul, Andrew, John,—what were they but heads of *particular* communities? And yet all were members *under one Head* [Christ].[3]

The Apostle Peter was himself merely a "member" of Christ's Church, as the other Apostles, and they were all merely heads of particular communities. The only universal Head is Christ. If St. Gregory were only to be interpreted by this one citation, he could be used as a support for the ecclesiology of the Eastern patriarchs in their encyclical of 1848 against Pope Pius IX. In the same letter, Gregory goes on to say:

> Certainly the apostle Paul, when he heard some say, *I am of Paul, I of Apollos, but I of Christ* [1 Cor 1:13], regarded with the utmost horror such dilaceration of the Lord's body, whereby they were joining themselves, as it were, to other heads, and exclaimed, saying, *Was Paul crucified for you*? Or *were you baptized in the name of Paul*? If then he shunned the subjecting of the members of Christ partially to certain heads, *as if beside Christ*, though this were to the apostles themselves, what will you say to Christ, *who is the Head of the universal Church*, in the scrutiny of the last judgment, *having attempted to put all his members under yourself by the appellation of Universal*?[4]

---

[3] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 5.18, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second Series, vol. 12 eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360205018.htm.

[4] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 5.18, *New Advent*. (emphasis added).

The rationale behind this is even clearer. Some of the Corinthians were claiming individual Apostles as their head, as if they belonged under them. Paul shunned the subjection of Christians underneath any of the Apostles, as if they were the head of the universal Church. Once again, St. Gregory interpreted this "appellation of universal" to be the patriarch of Constantinople's attempt to *subject all Christians underneath him as their head*, obviously something which he thought was illegal and erroneous. St. Gregory further argued that the universal bishop title removed the status of bishop from all the other bishops ordained into the episcopate. He continues:

> For, having confessed yourself unworthy to be called a bishop, you have at length been brought to such a pass as, despising your brethren, to covet *to be named the only bishop*.[5]

When St. Eulogius of Alexandria addressed Pope St. Gregory as "Universal Pope," the latter responded instructing him:

> For if your Holiness calls me Universal Pope, *you deny that you are yourself what you call me universally*. But far be this from us. Away with words that inflate vanity and wound charity.[6]

Once again, for St. Gregory, using the title "Ecumenical Pope" or "Universal Pope" implied a global diocese belonging to one single bishop, which made all other "bishops" in name only, which would be the under-clergy of the one single bishop of the world. In another place, St. Gregory says:

> And, not to speak of the injury done to your dignity, if one bishop is called Universal, the *Universal Church comes to ruin, if the one who is universal falls*. But far, far be this levity from my ears.[7]

This statement is quite interesting. It can almost appear Donatistic. When an individual bishop "falls," his diocese is not said to come

[5] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 5.18, *New Advent* (emphasis added).
[6] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 8.30, *New Advent*.
[7] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 7.27, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

to ruin. That bishop can fall privately and become a materially occult heretic. None of this would bring to ruin the sacraments of his diocese.[8] St. Gregory, then, most likely here returned to his former assumption stated to John, namely, that the title "Universal Bishop" would then create a truly single bishop in the world. In that case, a single bishop who becomes a public apostate (with no will to ordain a bishop) would render the episcopate itself without hope of being replenished with new bishops, since an episcopate needs a bishop in order to ordain. From these verses, one could argue quite convincingly that Pope St. Gregory denied any and all headship as belonging to one prelate over the universal Church, and thereby proving to manifestly contradict the current teaching of the Catholic Church. His thought process almost appears to be consistent only with the view of Church government where each ordained bishop is *equal* with other bishops, leaving no room for one of them to have coercive authority over the next. Was Gregory then flattening the episcopate to this equal status for each?

Herein we begin to see the tension in St. Gregory's understanding of papal authority and episcopal authority. The Protestant historian Philip Schaff admitted that "it cannot be denied that Gregory, while he protested in the strongest terms against the assumption by the Eastern patriarchs of the antichristian and blasphemous title of universal bishop, claimed and exercised, as far as he had the opportunity and power, the authority and oversight over the whole church of Christ, *even the East*."[9] In other places, the pope quite emphatically insisted on this. In a different letter to the Emperor Maurice, Pope Gregory writes:

> To all who know the Gospel, it is manifest that the *care of the whole Church* was entrusted by the voice of the Lord to blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. For to him it is said: *Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep*. To him it is said: *Behold Satan has desired to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. And you being converted confirmed your brethren*. To him it is said: *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever you shall*

[8] Even in the case of heresy and schism, St. Gregory held that a bishop could still validly ordain other bishops; see *Registrum Epistolarum* 11.67, *New Advent*.

[9] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *Medieval Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1908), 224.

> *bind on earth, it shall also be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Behold, he received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to bind and loose is given to him, *the care of the whole Church is committed to him, and also the primacy.*[10]

Here, St. Gregory acknowledged that St. Peter was singled out from the Apostles and given an office of government which stands above and over the universal Church. If that is not a sufficient description of a *universal headship* given to one over the rest, quite frankly, what would be? The terminology here of "feeding my sheep," "keys," "binding and loosing," and universal "care" all signify an office of government over subjects. What is interesting here is that St. Gregory took from the three famous Petrine texts of the New Testament to describe the unique prerogatives of Apostle Peter. Typically, the Orthodox speak of the common pastoral charge given to all bishops, the equal share in possessing the keys of the kingdom, and the "happenstance" nature of Christ's prayer for St. Peter. In contrast, Pope St. Gregory, who holds a special place in Orthodox veneration, saw a *singular* privilege given to a *singular* person over the *whole* corporate Church.

The important question is, what is the nature of these singular prerogatives? We know he held the extent of these prerogatives to be universal, but what is the precise nature of this universal Petrine authority? Feeding the sheep and strengthening the brethren both seem to be obvious descriptions of an office of pastor. What stands out the most in the Gregorian corpus is this imagery of the Apostle Peter alone receiving the keys and its associated power (*potestas*) of binding and loosing over the universal realm of Christ's sheepfold. That much is clearly attested.

Echoing the Petrinology of St. Leo the Great, St. Gregory saw St. Peter as the visible steward of God's Kingdom on earth. Binding and loosing refer to the powers of admitting or banishing persons from fellowship in the Church and therefore the authority to annunciate the terms and conditions of that fellowship. We see an example of this also in a letter to Brunichild, Queen of the Franks, where St. Gregory says: "Let your excellency, then, deign so willingly to give your attention to what we request of you that the blessed Peter, to whom the *power* (*potestas*) of binding and loosing has been given by the Lord Jesus Christ, may both grant to

[10] Gregory the Great, Epistle 5.37, in *Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power*, by Rev. Neil Sharkey (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 12.

your Excellence to rejoice here in your offspring, and after courses of many years cause you to be found, absolved from all ills before the face of the eternal judge."[11] As testified elsewhere, this was not, for St. Gregory, an absolutely common prerogative amongst the Apostles. If St. Peter was given the singular privilege of being entrusted with the power of the keys, and if St. Peter was given the office of chief steward and shepherd *to the universal Church*, then St. Peter was singled out for this in a way that no one else was. This is the only way to sustain the individuated uniqueness of Peter's key-holding function from all other pastors and bishops of the Church. As we saw from the corpus of St. Gelasius, the power of St. Peter can bind whatever anyone else has loosed or vice versa. St. Leo the Great spoke of the *plenitudo potestas* (full power) that was in the hands of the bishop of Rome toward the universal Church in his letter to a certain Anastasius, bishop of Thessalonica:

> For we made you *our deputy*, beloved, on the understanding that you were engaged to *share our responsibility*, not to take *plenary powers* (potestas) *on yourself*.[12]

St. Gregory assumed, like all his predecessors at least going back to St. Stephen (250), that when he decreed or commanded something, it was with the authority that Christ gave to St. Peter. In a letter to a certain John, bishop of Prima Justiniana, St. Gregory illustrated very clearly his consciousness that his authority was that of St. Peter's. In that letter, he annulled the sentence (bind) of the bishop of Prima Justiniana upon Adrian, bishop of Thebae, ordering him to be restored to his dignity, and then proceeded to punish John. He wrote:

> But as regards the present, *by the authority* (*auctoritate*) *of the blessed Peter*, Prince of the apostles, *we decree* that, the decrees of your judgment being first *annulled* and made of none effect, thou be deprived of holy communion for the

[11] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 6.5, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[12] Leo, Letter 14, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604014.htm (emphasis added). This is not to be limited to the fact that Thessalonica was the vicar of the Apostolic See for Rome's patriarchal supervision of the churches of the Illyrian peninsula. Leo is found saying that each bishop's responsibility in the entire Church is a part of the pope's responsibility; see Leo, Sermon 5, as quoted in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 281.

> space of thirty days, so as to implore *pardon* of our God for so great transgression with the utmost penitence and tears. But, if we should come to know that you have been remiss in carrying out this *our sentence*, know thou that not the injustice only, but also the contumacy, of your Fraternity will have to be *more severely punished.* But, as to our aforesaid brother and fellow bishop Adrian, condemned by your sentence, which, as we have said, was consistent with neither canons nor laws, *we order that he be restored,* Christ being with him, to his place and rank; so that neither may he be injured by the sentence of your Fraternity pronounced in deviation from the path of justice, nor may your Charity remain uncorrected; that so we may appease the indignation of the future judge.[13]

In this letter, Pope St. Gregory appealed to the authority (*auctoritas*) of Rome, or St. Peter through Rome, as it is the Chair of Peter, and issued orders, commands, enactments of punishment, and reversal of juridical sentences. Moreover, if the bishop of Prima Justiniana disobeyed, St. Gregory threatened a more severe punishment than the light excommunication that had already incurred. It might be said, though, that the churches in question (Thebes, Larissa, and Prima Justiniana) were within the canonical jurisdiction of Rome's patriarchate in Eastern lands. Therefore, all these appeals to St. Peter's authority and the power to bind and loose in foreign dioceses might possibly be explained as simply churches under the primacy of their patriarch and not the papacy as Catholics understand it, that is, as having universal jurisdiction. However, that will not satisfy, as we have similar language in St. Gregory being used in relation to churches that are *not within the Roman patriarchate.* In a letter to the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, St. Gregory described the judgment of his predecessor, Pelagius II, against the claims of John of Constantinople to be the bishop of the universal Church:

> Now eight years ago, in the time of my predecessor of holy memory Pelagius, our brother and fellow bishop John in the city of Constantinople, seeking occasion from another cause, *held a synod* in which he attempted to call himself Universal Bishop. Which as soon as my said predecessor

[13] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 3.6, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

> knew, he *dispatched letters annulling* by the *authority* (*auctoritate*) *of the holy apostle Peter* the acts of the said synod.[14]

Thus, the authority of St. Peter was being used by the bishop of Rome to annul the decrees of *a synod held in the East*, outside of the canonical patriarchate of Rome. So this Petrine authority exceeded the *patriarch to patriarchate* relationship, and what we have here is a *pope to universal Church* relationship.

According to the late medieval historian Margaret Deanesly, St. Gregory would say the "apostolic see was 'the chief of all the churches, whose bishop was responsible for the government of the whole church,' at least by the duty of correcting transgressors."[15] Two other scenarios prove the same. Two Eastern prelates, a presbyter John of Chalcedon and a monk named Athanasius, appealed to the pope of Rome over their condemnations received at the court of Constantinople.[16] They were both acquitted by the authority of the pope[17] and "vindicated the appellate jurisdiction of the Holy See."[18] After examining John of Chalcedon, St. Gregory wrote the following to Patriarch John of Constantinople:

> We therefore, after Council[19] held (as the tenor of the proceedings before us shows), having thoroughly examined and considered all that was necessary, inasmuch as we have been unable to find the aforesaid presbyter in any respect guilty, and especially as the plea which he delivered to the judges delegated by you is in entire accordance with the integrity of a right faith, we I say on this account, *disapproving the sentence of the said judges*, through the revealing grace of Christ our God and Redeemer, *pronounce him by our definite sentence Catholic and free from all charge of heresy*. Seeing, then, that we have sent him back to your

[14] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 5.43 (emphasis added).

[15] Margaret Deanesly, *A History of the Medieval Church: 590–1500* (London: Methuen, 1969, 9th edition from original 1925 ed.), 25.

[16] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 80.

[17] Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 19.

[18] Deanesly, *A History of the Medieval Church*, 26.

[19] In book 6.16, Gregory specifies even more of the conciliar nature of the examination of John of Chalcedon.

> Holiness, *it is for you to receive him* with the kindness which you show to all, and bestow on him your priestly charity, and defend him from all molestation, nor allow any one to busy himself in causing him trouble: but, as you defend others from oppression, so from him ought you not to withhold your succour.[20]

Once again, Rome overturns a juridical sentence bound by the court of Constantinople, a venue far outside the Roman patriarchate. In fact, in another letter to Marinianus, the bishop of Ravenna (Italy), St. Gregory argued that if the court of the Apostolic See was a superior authority to judge a sentence passed on a presbyter all the way off in far distances such as Constantinople, how much more did the Apostolic See have the right to pass judgment on conflicts in Ravenna. St. Gregory tells Marinianus:

> Nay, but do you not yourself know that the case which arose on the part of the presbyter John against John [the Patriarch] of Constantinople, our brother and fellow bishop, came before the Apostolic See, *and was decided by our sentence*? If, then, a cause was brought under our cognizance *from that city where the prince is*, how much more should an affair between you have the truth about it ascertained and be terminated *here* [i.e., the Apostolic See of Rome]?[21]

But if that were not enough, St. Gregory said in many places that Rome is the "head of all the churches," which *prima facie* seems like a contradiction to the point he made elsewhere on how St. Peter was simply the head of a "particular community." In one letter, he stated this emphatically: "Inasmuch as it is manifest that the Apostolic See is, *by the ordering of God, set over all Churches* . . . "[22] In the divine order, the See of Rome is "over" the universal Church. That suffices as a clear statement on the divine origin of the universal headship of the Apostolic See, which is also another *prima facie* contradiction to his earlier points about the sole

---

[20] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 6.16, *New Advent* (emphasis added); also see *Registrum Epistolarum* 6.24 to see further corroboration on this point. There, he argues to the bishop of Ravenna that a controversy within the territory Ravenna is certainly to be adjudicated by the superior tribunal of Rome if the latter has authority to overturn sentences made by the tribunal of Constantinople.

[21] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 6.24, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[22] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 3.30, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

universal headship of Christ over the Church. But when St. Gregory says, "set over all" the Churches, this can be read as a hierarchical headship rather than the concept of a single bishop with the world as his diocese.

To the question of whether the Eastern churches were "under" the Roman pope, Gregory answers:

> For as to what they say about the Church of Constantinople, who can doubt that *it is subject to the Apostolic See*, as both the most pious lord the emperor and our brother the bishop of that city continually acknowledge?[23]

And:

> As to his saying that he is subject to the Apostolic See, if any fault is found in bishops, I know not what bishop is not subject to it. But when no fault requires it to be otherwise, all according to the principle of humility are equal.[24]

This coincides with the recognition held by later Byzantine Emperor Phocas (602–610) in an address to Pope Boniface III, wherein the former recognized "the Apostolic Church of St. Peter as the head of all the churches."[25] Cambridge scholar John R. C. Martyn, a notable translator of the works of St. Gregory, states that St. Gregory "sought to emphasize the 'collegiate' nature of the episcopal office. . . . And yet, within the

[23] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 9.12, *New Advent* (emphasis added). The Bishop of Constantinople had been known for interpreting the ninth and seventeenth canons of Chalcedon as if the court of Constantinople were equal with Rome in hearing appeals. An example of this comes about with the intervention of Constantinople in the affairs of the churches of Thessaly concerning a certain Bishop Stephanus of Larissa. The court of Constantinople judged him deposed. He subsequently appealed to Rome, after which a synod under Pope Boniface II was held in 531, and it was stated there that the See of Constantinople had no competency over Rome in the regard of appeals. Much like St. Gregory the Great, Pope Boniface II declared "*that the Apostolic See rightfully* (jure) *claimed primacy* (*principatus*) *over the Churches in the whole world* (*in todo mundo*), *especially* (*specialiter*) *in the case of the Churches of Illyricum* (Illyrici Ecclesiae)" (citation taken from "The Papal Appeal Court in the Sixth Century: The Example of the Roman Synod of 531," by Dominic Moreau, in *Recht haben und Recht bekommen im Imperium Romanum. Das Gerichtswesen de Römischen Kaiserzeit und seine dokumentarische Evidenz. Ausgewählte Beiträge einer Serie von drei Konferenzen an der Villa in den Jahren 2010 bis 2012*, ed. Rudolf Haensch, with the collab. of Frederic Hurlet, et al. (Warszawa: Taubenschlag Foundation, 2016), 393.

[24] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 9.59, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[25] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 84.

'collegiate' structure of the patriarchates, Gregory insisted on the right of Rome to judge canonical cases on appeal, something enjoyed by virtue of the primacy of Peter's see."[26] The conclusion reached by Neil Sharkey successfully summarizes Gregory's thought here:

> In conclusion, then, it may be said that in the thought of Gregory the Great the See of Rome held the primacy of jurisdiction. Gregory considered himself the successor of St. Peter in the Roman See, for Peter lived on in his own person. The *principatus* of Peter is perpetuated, and his prerogatives become the prerogatives of Gregory as the Bishop of Rome. As a consequence, *the Bishop of Rome is the supreme head of the Church.*[27]

While still an eminent Lutheran historian, Jaroslav Pelikan summarized the prerogatives of the bishop of Rome in St. Gregory's pontificate. He writes:

> The bishop of Rome had the right of his own authority to annul the acts of a synod. In fact, where there was talk of a council to settle controversies, Gregory asserted the principle that "without the authority and the consent of the apostolic see, none of the matters transacted [by a council] have any binding force." . . . Although he held tenaciously to the authority of tradition and the teachings of the fathers, *the see of Rome had a special assignment to defend that tradition.*[28]

According to the late Anglican historian Frederick H. Dudden (1874–1955), a lecturer at Oxford, St. Gregory the Great had the following understanding of his own position:

> There can be no doubt that Gregory claimed a primacy, not of honour merely, but of authority, in the Church universal.

---

[26] Gregory the Great, *The Letters of Pope Gregory the Great, Books 1–4*, trans. John R. C. Martyn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 76.

[27] Sharkey, *Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power*, 43 (emphasis added).

[28] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 354 (emphasis added).

> To him the Apostolic See was "*the head of all the Churches*," and its bishop was called to undertake "the government" of the Church. The reason alleged for this preeminence was that the Roman bishop was the successor and vicar of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, to whom had been committed the "*cura et principatus*" of the whole Church, and on the stability of whom, as on a rock, the Church had been firmly established. . . . As the successor, then, of the chief of the Apostles, the Pope claimed a *divine right of primacy*. The decrees of councils would have no force "without the authority and consent of the Apostolic See." Appeals might be made to the Pope against the decisions *even of the Patriarch of Constantinople*, and such decisions might be reversed by sentence of the Papal court. All bishops, moreover, even the patriarchs, were subject to correction and punishment by the Pope, if guilty of heresy or uncanonical proceedings.[29]

J. N. D. Kelly wrote that St. Gregory was "indefatigable . . . in upholding the Roman primacy, and successfully maintained Rome's appellate jurisdiction in the East," and "he argued that St. Peter's commission made all churches, Constantinople included, subject to Rome."[30] That accords with the citations already examined which showed the headship of Rome to extend over the entire East as well as the West. Such an apparent inconsistency can be seen between St. Gregory's protest of the title "Ecumenical patriarch" and his own claim to universal primacy that, understandably, even Philip Schaff admitted: "We have no right to impeach Gregory's sincerity. But *he was clearly inconsistent in disclaiming the name, and yet claiming the thing itself*."[31]

These distinguished Protestant scholars, who cannot be said to be biased toward papal authority, understand the pontificate of St. Gregory as asserting the foundational theory that had already been more explicitly pronounced in his predecessors going back to at least Pope St. Leo the Great. And yet, in Gregory's plight against the "Universal Bishop," he

---

[29] Frederick H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), 224 (emphasis added).

[30] J. N. D. Kelly, "Gelasius," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 67.

[31] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Medieval Christianity*, vol. 4, 224 (emphasis added).

has perplexed many readers, since he appeared to be forbidding such a notion for all of God's priests, including himself.

Some scholars have recognized the basic semblance of the Leonine theory of Petrine power in St. Gregory, but that a certain change in public attitude and method began to take place. According to medieval historian Karl Morrison, "Gregory preserved the claims of precedence, but, in his thought, they lost their quality of administrative, or juridical, cohesiveness."[32] Rather than seeing the Church unified by "administrative hierarchy," says Morrison, it is to be unified by the "virtue of humility."[33] If St. Peter, the head of the Apostles and door-keeper of heaven, was willing to be reproved by his inferiors, then certainly all disciples of the Church should maintain a humble disposition in the face of all opposition.[34]

With St. Gregory, then, the understanding of Petrine supremacy was interpreted through the lens of a hermeneutic of humility and service. The power of the keys was not given to Peter or his successors in order for them to betray the virtue of humble service, lest he fail to imitate the Master, Jesus Christ. Therefore, even the successor of St. Peter, who St. Gregory admits is the head and arbiter of the Church's government, must find himself elbow-to-elbow and shoulder-to-shoulder with his fellow bishops in a charitable equality unless there be found an absolute need to enforce authority over them. As Gregory said, "When no fault requires it to be otherwise, all according to the principle of humility are equal," but "if any fault is found in bishops," all bishops now become inferior subjects to the judgment of the pope. The hermeneutic through which to read St. Gregory's statements, therefore, is this relentless goal of each disciple of Christ to serve his neighbor before himself and to assert the bind of charity before anything else. To bring one's neighbor under subjugation to one's authority is only to happen in cases of absolute necessity. This alone maintains the vocation of the servant of the servants of God.

Alternatively, the Greek Orthodox historian George Demacopoulos sees in St. Gregory a different motive, namely, by a "fear that traditional Roman rights were being usurped by patriarch and emperor alike."[35] In

[32] Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 130.

[33] Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church*, 130.

[34] Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church*, 131.

[35] George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), 152; I reject this explanation.

this reading, St. Gregory had a false interpretation of the term "Universal Bishop" since he read the Greek word for *universal* as meaning the whole space of the world.[36] With this in mind, St. Gregory interpreted the claim of a universal bishop as amounting to a claim for John of Constantinople to be the only bishop. If that definition of the term is accurate, then even a contemporary pope could condemn the concept. Still, there appears to be an unexplained tension here between Gregory's self-proclaimed primacy over the universal Church in blessed Peter and his denial of a universal patriarch governing the global universal Church. Was St. Gregory simply being inconsistent and incoherent? Dudden attempts to first resolve this by pointing to the fact that, for St. Gregory, "*universalis*" was interpreted as "*unus*," that is, "one," and thus while he never asserted that the successor of St. Peter was the "only bishop," he never denied that "the Pope was the Primate and Chief of Christian bishops."[37] Moreover, he never once utilized the authority of St. Peter to interfere with the canonical rights of other bishops.[38] The whole puzzle gets resolved by the last line of an already quoted citation from Gregory's corpus:

> Behold, [Peter] received the keys of the heavenly kingdom, he was granted the power to bind and loose, and the care and authority [*principatus*] of the entire church was committed to him, *and yet even he is not called the universal Apostle.*[39]

St. Peter was given the power of the keys and stands as the chief shepherd over the universal Church, and yet even he was not a universal Apostle, since there were eleven others. Here is a perfect reconciliation between the universal office of primacy in St. Peter and the legitimate

[36] George Demacopoulos, "Gregory the Great and the Sixth-Century Dispute over the Ecumenical Title," *Theological Studies* 70.3 (September 2009), 608; see also 601n3 for article-length material on the title "Ecumenical Patriarch." In short, the Byzantines did not see a monopoly in this use of the title to Constantinople and even less an attempt to subjugate the Apostolic See under the primacy of Constantinople. Rather, the use of the word "ecumenical" must have the sense of extended jurisdiction in the empire, perhaps within one's own territorial boundary. It could mean other measurements, but it was surely not a threat to Roman primacy.

[37] Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, vol. 2, 224.

[38] Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, vol. 2, 225.

[39] Gregory the Great, Epistle 5.44, as quoted in "Gregory the Great and the Sixth Century Dispute," by Demacopoulos, 609 (emphasis added).

authority of other members of the Church's governmental hierarchy. Just like St. Peter, the See of Rome stands in a singular prerogative over the universal Church, and this involves jurisdiction and power, but a title such as "Universal Apostle" or "Universal Bishop" would have, in the mind of St. Gregory, signified the other Apostles and bishops as mere representatives of the bishop of Rome. In that case, St. Gregory was only stating what is still held today by the Catholic Church in admitting that all bishops are successors to the Apostle and receive their status by divine institution and derive their jurisdiction directly from Jesus Christ. Each bishop has a divinely bestowed authority of power and jurisdiction immediately from Christ and not from the pope. That is Catholic doctrine.

On the other hand, there is more to what Gregory says about St. Peter and his chair of primacy. In one passage, he appeared to say that the Chair of Peter exists in three different locations, rather than one. In a letter to St. Eulogius of Alexandria, he wrote:

> Your most sweet Holiness has spoken much in your letter to me about the chair of Saint Peter, Prince of the apostles, saying that *he himself now sits on it in the persons of his successors.* And indeed I acknowledge myself to be unworthy, not only in the dignity of such as preside, but even in the number of such as stand. But I gladly accepted all that has been said, in that he has spoken to me about Peter's chair who occupies Peter's chair. And, though special honour to myself in no wise delights me, yet I greatly rejoiced because you, most holy ones, *have given to yourselves what you have bestowed upon me.* For who can be ignorant that holy Church has been made firm in the solidity of the Prince of the apostles, who derived his name from the firmness of his mind, so as to be called *Petrus from petra.* And to him it is said by the voice of the Truth, *To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.* And again it is said to him, *And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.* And once more, *Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Feed my sheep.* Wherefore though there are many apostles, yet with regard to the principality itself the See of the Prince of the apostles alone has grown strong in authority, *which in three places is the See of one.* For he himself exalted the See in which he deigned even to rest and end the present life. He himself adorned the See to which he sent his disciple as evangelist.

> He himself established the See in which, though he was to leave it, he sat for seven years. *Since then it is the See of one, and one See, over which by Divine authority three bishops now preside, whatever good I hear of you, this I impute to myself.*[40] .

The first observation here is that St. Gregory understood the "See of Peter" to preside over the universal Church, which confirms a universal primacy of the single Apostle, contrary to those who assert otherwise.[41] He also believed the *Tu es Petrus* investiture to pass on to St. Peter's successors. This prerogative of primacy, which gets inherited by St. Peter's successors, is then applied also to the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch. Does this flatten the standing of Rome next to Alexandria and Antioch? If the primacy is inherited by these three episcopal chairs, are these three chairs equal in authority? If not, what would be the principle of differentiation between the three to cause variation? It can be further asked: If the Alexandrine and Antiochene primacies are to be put on somewhat of a comparable status as Rome, that is, as *divinely instituted*, then why does the contemporary Catholic Church have a doctrine of irreversible-primacy for Rome but not for them? These questions are not *directly* answered by St. Gregory nor directly by anyone in the patristic era. In fact, even under Pope St. Nicholas I, the Petrine rights of Alexandria and Antioch are brought to the fore in the Photian controversy, as if they are to be upheld at all costs. An Orthodox might look at this Petrine emphasis and inquire whether Rome really can sustain a unique irreversible-primacy for Rome when the Catholic Church does not for Alexandria and Antioch.

What is clear is that there should already have been an indisputable recognition that Rome was the first see while the Alexandrine and Antiochene patriarchs were second and third, respectively, according to the official Roman order up until the ninth century, at least. St. Damasus's decree from the Council of Rome (382) clearly ordered Rome as first. If we look at that decree once again, St. Damasus orders Rome as first for the following chief reason:

---

[40] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 7.40, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[41] One could make a good case that the Orthodox have rejected the very concept of a universal primacy belonging to St. Peter. That certainly was denied by the great Encyclical of 1848 by the patriarchs in response to Pope Pius IX. Modern Orthodox scholars are also found rejecting the concept.

> Though all the catholic churches diffused throughout the world are but one bridal chamber of Christ, yet the holy Roman church has been set before the rest by no conciliar decrees, but has obtained the primacy by the *voice of our Lord* and Saviour *in the gospel*: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock . . . shall be loosed in heaven." . . . The first see of the apostle Peter is therefore the Roman church, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."[42]

This was repeated again and again by Roman bishops up until St. Gregory and beyond. According to this view, the Roman church was instituted by the "voice" of Christ and is just as permanent as the Scripture itself. St. Damasus did not give the same grounding to the primacies of Alexandria and Antioch.[43] Roman Catholic ecclesiology sees a unique place in the Roman See, as it is the see wherein St. Peter actually left *his primatial episcopate* and the full *prerogatives that go with it* (something lacking in other sees). After his seven-year term as president of Antioch, St. Peter left, and since the universal prerogative of his office was attached to his person, the person who took up the presidency of Antioch after him (St. Evodius) did not inherit the universal papal prerogatives. Alexandria is only Petrine through the proxy of Peter's disciple, St. Mark. St. Gregory was very adamant, therefore, that the Roman See, and not the other two Petrine sees, was the singular head of all the churches, and that it carried a singular prerogative of government in the universal Church. There must be some explanation for why Rome, a Western see, obtained the full, unique, and singular status of being supreme over all others for St. Gregory despite his seeming to equate the three patriarchs under one chair of St. Peter. Fr. Meyendorff is famous for arguing that Rome was the first see because it was the capital of the empire, since Alexandria (the second city of the empire) became second.[44] If Petrinity were the driving factor, then, argues Fr. Meyendorff, Antioch would be second

[42] Council of Rome (382), *Post ha omnes*, PL 13.374, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 131 (emphasis added).

[43] He writes: "The second see was consecrated at Alexandria, in the name of blessed Peter, by his disciple Mark the evangelist; and he, being directed S. Peter into Egypt, preached the word of truth, and perfected a glorious martyrdom. And, the third see of the most blessed apostle Peter is at Antioch, which is held in honour because he lived there before he came to Rome, and there, first, the name of the new race of Christians arose" (E. Giles, *Documents*, 131).

[44] John Meyendorff, "The Council of 381 and the Primacy of Constantinople," in *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 131.

because it had a more direct relationship to St. Peter.[45] If Petrinity was the determining factor, then Jerusalem would have been first as that is where St. Peter first presided and preached. Or, some argue, that Antioch

[45] Perhaps it is more than coincidence that Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch are the order of the cities in the Roman Empire. Flavius Josephus (37–100) speaks of how Antioch "is the metropolis of Syria, and without dispute deserves the place of the *third city* in the habitable earth that was under the Roman empire, both in magnitude, and other marks of prosperity" (*The Wars of the Jews*, 3.2.4, trans. William Whiston [Project Gutenberg eBook, 2009], https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link32HCH0002. However, we don't have any patristic support that the socio-political prestige of Antioch contributed to the Antiochene primacy over the East. All we have are religious reasons, preeminently rooted in that St. Peter occupied the episcopal throne of Antioch for seven years prior to traveling to Rome; see *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, translated with an introduction by Raymond Davis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 1. Historical theologians have rightly asked how it is that Alexandria ranked second in the taxis of sees if Antioch carried the attribute of a seven-year episcopal reign of St. Peter in person. However, we can understand that when St. Peter left Antioch, he left St. Evodius to take the reign of Antioch and then moved to station his primary ministry in the Roman church. According to tradition, after his martyrdom in Rome, St. Mark, whom tradition calls the "interpreter" and "son" of St. Peter's ministry, traveled to Alexandria and enhanced the apostolicity of the Egyptian churches in that vicinity. See Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004), 2–9; "St. Mark," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 859; see L. A. Losie, "Mark, Secret Gospel of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 708–12. As such, the placement contest between Antioch and Alexandria may turn on the position of St. Evodius as the immediate successor of St. Peter in Antioch being inferior to the apostolic ministry of St. Mark, St. Peter's personal interpreter and son in the Gospel mission. Indeed, this would have been a much more mature ministry of St. Peter that St. Mark would have left if it were right after his martyrdom in Rome sometime during the 60s. Pope St. Leo the Great seems to believe that there was a master-disciple relationship between St. Peter and St. Mark, and thus a special bond between the Roman See and the Alexandrine See. He writes in a letter to Dioscorus of Alexandria: "For since the most blessed Peter received the headship of the Apostles from the Lord, and the church of Rome still abides by His institutions, it is wicked to believe that *His holy disciple Mark*, who was the first to govern the church of Alexandria, formed his decrees on a different line of tradition: seeing that without doubt both *disciple and master* drew but one Spirit from the same fount of grace, and the ordained could not hand on anything else than *what he had received from his ordainer*" (Letter 9, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895], rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604009.htm [emphasis added]). St. Evodius, who took up the presidency of Antioch when St. Peter left, may fall inferior to this special apostolic relationship. Beyond this, we are not given any more details from which to speculate. It is quite possible, as I've already mentioned, that there was partly an apostolic reason and partly a socio-political reason mixed together. I take here from the works of Fr. Francis Dvornik.

would be first because that is where St. Peter first presided. Whatever the argument might be, this position of basing the Roman primacy on the "political and social realism alone" is antithetical to the understanding that Pope St. Gregory himself had on the matter. Indeed, within the first millennium, we are never given the Meyendorffian explanation for why Alexandria comes before Antioch since all the reasons given are religious and Petrine and not political or imperial.

Certainly, no one can take St. Gregory to be a supporter of the idea that the See of Constantinople obtains equal Petrine prerogatives toward the universal Church as Rome. While he surely understood the See of Constantinople had ranked second in the taxis of sees, he never attributed it to any inheritance from St. Peter or his primacy from the See of Rome.[46] And even if, for the sake of argument, there ever were an equation between Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, St. Gregory still held these three, and no other, least of all Constantinople, *as the rock and head of the Church.*[47] As shown above, the likelihood that he

[46] If St. Gregory understood the patriarch of Constantinople to have inherited the full Petrine prerogatives of Elder Rome, he would have told Eulogius that the See of Peter was presided over by four persons, the patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch. However, in that epistle to Eulogius, where he designated the See of Peter in three locations, he says the following: "Since then it is the See of one, and one See, over which by Divine authority *three bishops* now preside, whatever good I hear of you, this I impute to myself" (*Registrum Epistolarum* 7.40, *New Advent*). Certainly, if the patriarch of Constantinople was a Petrine See through its equation with Rome, St. Gregory would have said four bishops govern the one Chair of Peter. This excludes St. Gregory from being a supporter of a universal Petro-Constantinopolitan primacy.

[47] Batiffol writes: "An examination of the texts which one can bring forth, proves, above all, the deference with which Gregory treated the See of Alexandria and the See of Antioch, both of which were apostolic. But the sincere and skillful humility of Saint Gregory does not harm the privilege of his own proper See, and nowhere do we find that he actually attributed this prerogative to other Sees than his own" (*Saint Grégoire le Grand* [Paris, 1928]; also in Sharkey, *Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power*, 42. St. Gregory, in one other epistle to Eulogius of Alexandria, seems to draw a symbolic and figurative principle of equality while also recognizing that the Petrine quality of Rome and Alexandria are not the same: "Since then, dearest brother, we are held together by the root of charity, neither will bodily absence nor distance of places have power to assert any claim over us, inasmuch as we who are one are surely not far from each other. Now we wish to have always this common charity with the rest of our brethren. Yet there is something that binds us in a certain peculiar way to the Church of Alexandria, and compels us, as it were by a special law, to be the more prone to love it. For, as it is known to all that the blessed evangelist Mark was sent by Saint Peter the apostle, his master, to Alexandria, so we are bound together in the unity of this master and his disciple, so that I seem to preside over the see of the disciple because of the master, and you over the see of the master because of the disciple" (*Registrum Epistolarum* 6.60, *New Advent*, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360206060.htm).

thought the shared Petrine attribution between Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch entailed they each shared the same authority is next to none, as St. Gregory repeatedly situated the Apostolic See as the head of *all the patriarchs* and could reverse the decision of any of the hierarchs in the East, presumably even over Antioch or Alexandria. Jaroslav Pelikan hits close to the truth in his own analysis:

> To be sure, Peter had also been in Alexandria and in Antioch, and Gregory sometimes put forth the idea that these two patriarchs shared with him the primacy given to Peter: Rome was the see where Peter had died, Alexandria the see to which he had sent Mark, and Antioch the see which he himself had occupied for seven years. There was one see of Peter in three places. *But this touch of whimsy about the apostle did not have any far-reaching implications for Gregory's concrete doctrine of primacy in the church. Everybody knew that the see of Peter was Rome.*[48]

What made Rome stand alone vis-à-vis Alexandria and Antioch was still something about the person of St. Peter rather than Rome as the imperial capital, and it was to the person that the prerogatives of universal primacy pertained. As such, the successor to St. Peter's office where St. Peter's person presided last is the one and only figure who inherits the prerogatives of the *Tu es Petrus* (Matt 16), that is, that investiture which came from the "voice" of the Lord. That uniqueness should suffice to explain both the primacy of Rome over Alexandria and Antioch as well as the individuated divinely irreversible primacy in Rome and not in the other two.[49] The fact is, everybody knew which court to bring their case to when they stood condemned on possibly unjust causes, on matters of either doctrine or discipline. If needed, St. Gregory was prepared to overturn sentences that were unjust anywhere in either East or West. However, as Siecienski notes, even if St. Gregory held to a similar substance of papal theory as his predecessors, *his style was noticeably different.*[50] While he was well aware of the function as supreme arbiter, as successor to the prerogatives of St. Peter, which included the subjection of all Churches underneath the Apostolic See, he was overwhelmed with

[48] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 353 (emphasis added).

[49] See *Registrum Epistolarum* 6.61, *New Advent.*

[50] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 193.

the humility required by Christ for the leadership of the Church.[51] "All bishop and patriarchs," describes Deanesly, "could be corrected by the pope, if guilty of heresy or offence against the canons,"[52] but otherwise St. Gregory saw himself as underneath his brother bishops, if not their equal. This is the sort of characteristic that is implied in the following statements he made in his epistle to Theotista:

> If Blessed Peter, when he is reproached by the faithful, were to attend to the authority which he received in the Holy Church, he could respond that the *sheep ought not dare to rebuke their shepherd*, but if in the quarrel of the faithful he were to say something of his power, he would not be a mild doctor; *therefore he placated them with humble reason.*[53]

Notice here the distinction between what St. Gregory understood was within St. Peter's power and yet what was more fitting for St. Peter to do in his mission to conform himself to Christ. While St. Peter had the power to refuse being judged by the flock, he would be a severe pastor in doing so, and thus the route of humbly accepting criticism and dialogue was the best choice of action. Again, the major difference with St. Gregory's outlook on the extent of Rome's primacy concerns his principle of collegial consent and humble cooperation. He lived out the perfect title of the popes, *Servus Servorum Dei* (Servant of the Servants of God) and shaped the Roman papacy with "monastic humility."[54] When and where he could stress the role of servant, he would do so at all costs. Just as the Lord would deny that his disciples could possibly call a man "Father" or "Teacher" since there is one Father who is God and one Teacher who is the Christ, so also, in the paradoxical way of Wisdom literature, St. Gregory could be found denying that the Apostolic See sits as an authority over the universal Church when, in another sense, it really does. When it came to necessity, St. Gregory could remind all churches of both East and West to be "subject" to the authority of the Apostolic See, but what is far more explicit is his unwavering commitment to look upon all of the bishops as equals in practice.

---

[51] Peter Iver Kaufman, *Church, Book, and Bishop: Conflict and Authority in Early Latin Christianity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 119–20.

[52] Deanesly, *A History of Medieval Church*, 25.

[53] Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Tomus II*, 210 (emphasis added).

[54] Brian E. Daley, S.J., "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches," in *Church Unity & The Papal Office*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 48.

*Chapter Eighteen*

# Monothelitism and the Papacy (Lateran, 649)

THE CONTROVERSY surrounding the debate over whether there are one or two energies and wills in the Lord Jesus Christ affords the opportunity for one of the most striking testaments of papal power by patristic saints. More importantly, the testimonies that come from significant Eastern voices make it all the more considerable in the debate between Catholics and Orthodox. The testimonies of Popes St. Theodore I, St. Martin I, St. Agatho, and St. Leo II are extremely clear in that they understood the primacy of Rome to be derived not from post-apostolic arrangements but from the *Tu es Petrus* investiture given by the divine voice of the Lord and Savior while he stood in the flesh face to face with St. Peter. Pope St. Theodore was even a Greek originally born in Palestine, and his father was a bishop in the patriarchate of Jerusalem.[1] In addition, the Eastern voices of the patriarch of Jerusalem such as St. Sophronius, St. Maximus the Confessor (together with Greek monastic associates), St. Sergius of Cyprus, St. Stephen of Dor, St. John of Philadelphia, and Greeks monastics at the Council of Lateran (649) all testified to the divine institution of the Roman primacy of jurisdiction and her supreme doctrinal authority.

[1] Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 96.

This was perhaps an era with the most dense and concentrated evidence from both the Latins and Greeks on the office of the papacy.

Even from a socio-political perspective, the role of the See of Rome as the supreme doctrinal arbiter continued to come up despite the subservience that the Roman church came to have under the authority of the Byzantine emperor. If the See of Constantinople was supposed to gain a primacy over the whole Church because of her civil position in the Roman *oikumene*, that civil preeminence certainly offered no help in the seventh century. Likewise, if the See of Rome was supposed to learn more humble submission to the newly founded powers, sort of like Alexandria and Antioch, it was precisely during Rome's civil humiliation that she continued to be the "centre of reference"[2] in theological controversy, emerging as the voice of St. Peter to strengthen the brethren.

The background of the Monothelite dispute was set, once again, in the Byzantine emperor's zeal for the unity of the Christian faith and the tranquility of the empire. Emperor Heraclius (610–641) had been occupied with defending Eastern lands from the invasion of the Persian armies. In particular, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine were of primary concern.[3] In order to better achieve unity between the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians, Heraclius took interest in the idea of Christ having two natures while being singular in operation or energy.[4] With the help of the Sergius (610–638), the patriarch of Constantinople, what was produced was an attempt to satisfy the Chalcedonian tradition by asserting Christ in both natures of man and God, "but to reconcile this with a declaration of *one activity in Christ*."[5] The plan was to extend this as an olive branch to the ultra-Cyrillian Miaphysite theologians who were sensitive to talk of duality in Christ and preferred a dogmatic stance on Christ's singular unity. Thus far, we have an attempt to reconcile this detrimental schism in Christendom with *Monoenergism* (one operation or energy in Christ). A temporary success was obtained in

[2] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 360.

[3] John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 336; L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 260.

[4] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 337. Meyendorff notes how this idea of one operation in Christ comes close to the Christology of Severus of Antioch (459–538), a heavy-hitting Cyrillian theologian for the Miaphysites; see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 261.

[5] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils* (emphasis added).

Armenia and Alexandria,[6] where a "Pact of Union" included an agreed upon doctrinal content.[7]

Opposition to this came from a theologian in Jerusalem, St. Sophronius (560–638), who traveled to Constantinople in order to talk sense into Sergius about the operations in Christ, that is, one for each nature, and therefore two, not one. He was slightly successful in that whatever plans there were to publish a decree in support of Monoenergism, Sergius ended up writing a resolution (called a *Psephos*) in the form of a decree in 634, "which banned further discussion on the Christological operations."[8] So the matter was left unanswered, at this point, and St. Sophronius acquiesced to this *Psephos*,[9] a policy which St. Maximus would not tolerate on the matter of energies and wills.[10] In 634, Sergius sent his *Psephos* to Rome to hear what Pope Honorius might say about it. In Pope Honorius's famous letter of reply, he agreed with Sergius against ruling dogmatically on either one operation or two operations in Christ, since there was, in his mind, little to no foundation for asserting one way or the other from prior councils, patristic tradition, or Holy Scripture.[11] However, in that letter, he also stated clearly that "we confess *one will* of the Lord Jesus Christ, since manifestly our nature was assumed by the Godhead, *there being no sin in it*."[12] As one reads this first letter to Sergius, it becomes clear that Honorius intended to say that, in the dispensation of human fallenness, there are, as St. Paul taught, two different laws or wills existing within the human mind (see Rom 7:13–25), pulling the human one way at one time while the Spirit

[6] Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 2014), 181.

[7] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 263; Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, eds., *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church: Letters from Late Antiquity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 166. The latter editors reference CPG 7613 Supp.; Pauline Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 168–77.

[8] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 9.

[9] P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 29–30. Meyendorff also comments on St. Sophronius's moderation; see *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 349. Even St. Maximus the Confessor, according to Meyendorff, "was attracted by the conciliatory tone of the *Psephos*" (*Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 351n49). If anything, this demonstrates that this debate over the wills and energies in Christ was a new stage of debate in Christology.

[10] St. Maximus took the position that refraining from saying either one or two wills and operations was tantamount to heresy.

[11] P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 201. Also, L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 266.

[12] P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 198–99 (emphasis added).

is pulling it another way (Gal 5:16–17).[13] Since Christ's human will was always perfectly subject to God, without a separate inclination as fallen humanity (Rom 7:1–5), he has "one will." There does not appear to be too clear a violation of doctrine in this assertion of Honorius. If by "one will" Honorius meant no contrariness between the human will as moved to obey God's will versus against God's will, then Christ had "one will." That is still consistent with the idea that Christ's one Person has one will operating from his human nature and another from his divine nature, albeit in perfect harmony. Certainly, this letter of Honorius would ultimately be judged by the Church as worthy of censure and condemnation, as if it taught the Monothelite error.

Be that as it may, Sergius received this letter from Honorius, and seeing in it a favorable defense of "one will" in Christ, worked together with Emperor Heraclius to publish an imperial edict called the *Ekthesis* (638). In this edict, the erroneous teaching of Monothelitism was now published and ecclesial policy, per order of the emperor.[14] By the time the Ekthesis had been sent to Rome in order to obtain the pope's official assent, Pope Severinus (successor to Honorius) had just enough time to publicly reject it before falling asleep in the Lord, as did St. Sophronius, and then also Sergius himself.[15] The battle was taken up afresh in 640 by St. Maximus the Confessor. In addition, St. Maximus gave some breathtaking statements on his own beliefs concerning the *source, nature, and extent* of papal authority,[16] to which our attention will now turn before revisiting Monothelitism.

One episode that took place in Constantinople, recorded by St. Maximus himself, merits a brief examination. Messengers from Rome had traveled to Constantinople in order to receive confirmation of the election of Pope Honorius's successor, Severinus (at this time, the emperor gave imperial confirmation of the ordinations of the Apostolic See), and upon arrival, the clergy of Constantinople stated the newly elected Severinus of Rome would have to accept the *Ekthesis* if

[13] Quite clearly, Honorius was thinking of the two "wills" or "laws" that exist in the human being which pull the human being either to conformity to God or toward the committing of sins. Honorius did not wish to ascribe to Christ this inner duality and so insisted on a singularity of will.

[14] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 93.

[15] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 93.

[16] In analyzing Maximus's view of the papacy, I interact with Eastern Orthodox patristics scholar Jean-Claude Larchet in his "The Question of the Roman Primacy in the Thought of Saint Maximus the Confessor," in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Cardinal Walter Kasper (New York: The Newman Press, 2006), 188–209.

he wanted imperial recognition. The representatives sent from Rome then answered that they were not competent to judge the acceptability of the *Ekthesis* (Severinus had not openly condemned it yet) and would send the document back to the pope in Rome for him to decide. In addition, they made it clear that the imperial government should not impose itself in crucial matters concerning the faith, in particular over the Roman See. They added a reason for why this should not be the case. St. Maximus records:

> How much more in the case of the clergy and Church of the Romans, which from old until now *presides over all the churches which are under the sun*? Having surely received this canonically, as well from councils and the apostles, as from the *princes* of the latter [Peter and Paul], and being numbered in their company, she is subject to no writing or issues of synodical documents, on account of the eminence of her pontificate *even as in all these things all are equally subject to her according to sacerdotal law.*[17]

By extending this Roman primacy to the churches "under the sun," St. Maximus certainly intended to say that it is a universal primacy, and that not a single church is excluded from it. Some interpreters keep their finger on that bit where Maximus says the primacy is derived from the Church's canons, and it proves a worthy pause. It should be quickly added that he also included apostolic origin, albeit *from both* Sts. Peter and Paul.

Did St. Maximus give a different origin to Rome's primacy than does the contemporary Catholic Church? A canonically derived primacy built from a dual apostolicity is not necessarily expressing a divinely instituted

[17] Maximus the Confessor, *Ex epistola sancti Maximi scripta ad abbatem Thalassium*, PL 129, 583–86, in "Maximus the Confessor and Ecumenism," trans. A. Edward Siecienski, in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 553 (emphasis added). See equivalent translation in A. Edward Siecienski's *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 151. The Latin has also been translated by Dom John Chapman in *The Condemnation of Pope Honorius* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1907), 27. A Latin copy can be read in Mansi 10.677. This reference and many of St. Maximus's statements on papal authority exist only in Latin, but as Price notes, this is not a reason to exercise doubt in their authenticity since "a wider selection of sources from within Maximus' circle (including the Acts of the Lateran Synod) repeats the same pro-Roman rhetoric" (*The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 37).

organ built by Jesus Christ to be essential to His Church. *Prima facie*, one cannot deny the difference. And if all St. Maximus had said about Roman primacy was that it had dual apostolic pedigree and received authority from the canons of the Church, it could safely be said that this record cannot qualify as evidence of the kind of Roman primacy taught at the First Vatican Council. Fortunately, there is more Maximian data to observe than merely the above citation. As shown further down, St. Maximus said enough in other places that requires a synthesis between a divinely instituted papacy and a papacy which is canonically regulated. To better understand this data, it will be required to give more back history of this momentous time in the history of the Church.

Pope Severinus held the pontifical throne for a short term and was then succeeded by Pope John IV, who held a synod in Rome to officially condemn the *Ekthesis*. The reader should bear in mind, this was two years after the death of Pope Honorius. It had been claimed that the Apostolic See approved the *Ekthesis* because of Honorius's letters to Sergius. In an attempt to salvage the reputation of Honorius, John IV (640–642) came to his defense by trying to exegete and interpret what Honorius really meant from his letters now stored in the Roman archives. He wrote in 641 to the successor of Heraclius, Emperor Constantine III, the following:

> During the incarnation of his holy flesh he never had two contrary wills and the *will of his flesh* never opposed the *will of his mind*. Knowing that there was no sin of any kind in him during his birth and earthly career, we properly say and rightly profess that there was *one will in the humanity of his holy incarnation*, and we do not admit that there were *two contrary wills of mind and flesh* as some heretics are known to babble foolishly as if he were merely man. It is thus that our aforementioned predecessor [Honorius] should be understood as having replied to the question of the aforenamed patriarch Sergius, that is to say that in our Saviour two contrary wills, that is, in his members, do not exist, because *he derived no stain of evil from the sin of the first man*. . . . But if at times some less intelligent person should complain about how he [Honorius] may be known to be speaking *only of the human and not of the divine nature also* . . . the person who doubts about this ought to realize that the reply [of Honorius] was an *ad hoc* one to the patriarch's

> question. . . . And so my aforesaid predecessor was talking about the mystery of the incarnation *when he said that there were not contrary wills in Christ as there are in us sinners: now some people, twisting this statement to their own sense, suspect that he taught that there was only one will common to both divinity and humanity; and this is altogether opposed to the truth.*[18]

We see here that Pope John IV defended Honorius from teaching that Christ has one single natural will which has perfect harmony between his divinity and humanity together (i.e., which would be the view condemned at Constantinople 681), and described what he thought Honorius originally intended. St. Maximus himself also spent a great deal of energy defending Honorius from the charge of Monothelitism.[19] In one attempt of Maximus to prove Honorius's orthodoxy, he echoed Pope John IV in saying that "Honorius' definition referred *only to the humanity of Christ.*"[20] If no duality of will is in the humanity, that does not entail there is no additional will from the divine nature.[21]

In the meantime, the newly elected patriarch Pyrrhus of Constantinople, who had succeeded Sergius, was deposed by imperial authority "for political reasons"[22] and was thereafter exiled to North Africa, where he would eventually debate St. Maximus on the issue of one or two wills in Christ. As his replacement, a certain Paul II was ordained to the throne of Constantinople. In 642, the Jerusalem-born Greek

[18] John VI, *Apology for Pope Honorius*, PL 80.602–07, D 4968 (253), in *Christ and His Mission: Christology and Soteriology*, eds. James M. Carmody, S.J. and Thomas E. Clarke, S.J. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1966), 147–48 (emphasis added). This letter was drafted by John Symponus, the same who drafted the letter of Honorius to Sergius; see William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 230.

[19] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 91. During his debate with Pyrrhus, Maximus simply repeated the explanation of John IV; see Maximus the Confessor, *Disputations with Pyrrhus*, trans. Joseph Farrell (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Monastery Press, 2014), $150.

[20] Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15 (emphasis added).

[21] The ninth century Roman archivist and librarian Anastasius, nearly two hundred years after the Council of 681, continued to defend Honorius from the personal charge of heresy. For more information on Maximus's defense of Honorius, see Bronwen Neil, *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs: The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006), 74–76.

[22] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 274; Ekonomou writes that it was due to an alleged involvement of Pyrrhus in a plot to murder Constantine III (*Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 98).

St. Theodore was elected to papal office, succeeding John IV. He followed his predecessor and took forceful moves against Constantinople's *Ekthesis* and, by "an unprecedented expression of papal assertiveness,"[23] volunteered to send legates to investigate whether Pyrrhus's deposition was conducted canonically.[24] Unfortunately, this did not materialize, but it shows a clear claim to universal jurisdiction.

Back in the farther East, the chair of St. Sophronius was usurped by Sergius of Joppa, a committed Monothelite. Tragically, this Sergius took the opportunity of ordaining heterodox clergy throughout the patriarchate of Jerusalem. Alexandria was also occupied by Monothelites, and Antioch was left without an occupant. A quite dreadful situation for Eastern Christendom. "With a polarization of loyalties, Rome was left as the only established rival to Constantinople."[25] With no orthodox support in the East to exterminate heresy and schism, the patriarchate of Jerusalem and Antioch became prone to Monothelite infiltration, leaving Rome to take initiative in cleaning house in these regions.

Palestinian Bishop Stephen of Dor lived to explain the events while attending the council to be held in Rome in 649. Recounting the episode of Sergius in Jerusalem,[26] he describes how, upon informing Pope St. Theodore of the ordination of Monothelites in the far East, he himself was authoritatively appointed by the pope "to carry out a canonical deposition of the bishops ordained in this way."[27] This was done on the basis, says St. Stephen, of "an apostolic letter"[28] which appointed him as his "representative."[29] In turn, he was also empowered by the pope to venture into Eastern territories to ordain clergy who gave open and public profession of orthodoxy.[30] Despite these efforts being largely resisted in the East,[31] it shows an "assertion of papal authority *over matters*

[23] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 98.

[24] This sort of papal initiative occurred in Constantinople in 861 when Photius replaced Ignatius of Constantinople. Here, the same intention occurs over two hundred years earlier.

[25] Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 251.

[26] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 148.

[27] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 148.

[28] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 148; Price describes this as an "unprecedented usurpation of jurisdiction in an eastern patriarchate," 54.

[29] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 148.

[30] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 148.

[31] Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 295–96.

*within the jurisdiction of an Eastern patriarchate.*"[32] That much is certainly clear.[33]

While in North Africa, Pyrrhus recanted of Monothelitism after debating with St. Maximus and then made his trip to Rome in order to formally confess the true faith before Pope St. Theodore, who then recognized him as the lawful occupant of the See of Constantinople. This overshadowed the validity of Paul II's place as the patriarch of Constantinople. Before Pyrrhus had given clear indication of his will to recant, St. Maximus made certain statements about the occasion in a letter to Peter the Illustrious (*Scripta ad Petrum Illustrem*) which opens new doors to understanding how he perceived the Roman primacy. Concerning the criminal behavior of Pyrrhus and his need to recant, St. Maximus writes:

> For it is not right that one who has already been *condemned and cast out by the Apostolic See*[34] of the city of Rome for his wrong opinions should be named with any kind of honor, until he be *received by her*, having returned to her, nay, to our Lord, by a pious confession and orthodox faith. . . . Let him [Pyrrhus] hasten before all things to satisfy the Roman See, *for if it is satisfied*, all will agree in calling him pious and orthodox. For he only speaks in vain who thinks he ought to persuade or entrap *persons like myself*, and does not satisfy and implore the blessed Pope of the most holy Church of the Romans. . . . For if he thinks he must *satisfy others*, and fails to implore the most blessed Roman Pope, he is acting like a man who, when accused of murder or

[32] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 98 (emphasis added).

[33] When St. Theodore's successor, Pope St. Martin, recounted the intervention of Theodore in the East through Stephen of Dor, he made it explicitly clear that the Apostolic See was empowered with "apostolic authority" by Jesus Christ through St. Peter to appoint a representative (a vicar, which was Stephen of Dor) to travel to the Eastern regions to enact depositions and ordinations of clergy. The language used was that the vicar or representative of the Apostolic See operates under the "command" and "order" of the pope in order to "confirm" new elections to Church offices. For a full description of this, see the English translation of Pope St. Martin's letter to John of Philadelphia (*PL* 87.153–64; Mansi 10.805–14) in *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church*, eds. Neil and Allen, 213–18.

[34] St. Maximus recognized the authority of Rome in excommunicating and deposing Pyrrhus. Some Orthodox have understood this prerogative to be in every bishop. While true, there are degrees to which an excommunication binds the Church at large. Since Maximus understood Rome to be the supreme judge in the Church, her binding and loosing was superior to all others. This is why Pyrrhus must have his case settled there.

> some other crime, does not hasten to prove his innocence *to the judge appointed by law*, but only uselessly and without profit does his best to demonstrate his innocence to *private individuals, who have no power to acquit him from the accusation*. . . . Wherefore . . . if he is careful to do this, exhort him to make a becoming statement to the Roman Pope, so that *by his command* the matter concerning Pyrrhus may be canonically and suitably ordered for the glory of God.[35]

Notice St. Maximus was under the impression that the Apostolic See was the official and divinely appointed final court of Christendom. The judge "appointed by law," for St. Maximus, was the pope of Rome. It was this "insistence that it is to the Roman pope *as to the supreme court* that Pyrrhus must betake himself to as to abjure his error."[36] This was an obvious reference to the universal powers of binding and loosing over all the churches. We know that this was what St. Maximus had in mind concerning the pope, for in the same letter, he stated the following in the same matter concerning the acquittal of heretics. Pyrrhus must take his recantation to Rome, which was further described as:

> The Apostolic Throne, *which is from the incarnate Son of God himself* and which, *in accordance* with the holy canons and the definitions of faith, received from all the holy councils universal and *supreme dominion* (*imperium*), *authority* (*auctoritatem*), and the *power* (*potestas*) over all of God's churches throughout the world *to bind and loose*.[37]

An apostolic throne which is from Christ himself must be a reference to the throne of St. Peter. In another text describing the authority of Rome, St. Maximus states:

---

[35] Maximus, *Diffloratio ex Epistola Sancti Maximi ad Petrum illustrem*, in Mansi 10.692; also in *Opscula theologica et polemica*, 12 (*PG* 91.141–46), in *The Condemnation of Pope Honorius*, by John Chapman, 39–42 (emphasis added).

[36] Aidan Nicholas, *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1993), 56 (emphasis added).

[37] *Opscula theologica et polemica*, 12 (*PG* 91.141–46), in *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 110 (emphasis added). See also Chapman's translation, *The Condemnation of Pope Honorius*, 39–42. Latin text added by me.

> For *ever since* the incarnate Word of God came down to us, all the churches of Christians everywhere have held the greatest Church there to be their *sole base and foundation*, since on the one hand, it is in no way overcome by the gates of Hades, *according to the very promise of our Savior*, but holds the keys of the orthodox confession and faith in him and opens the only true and real religion to those who approach with godliness, and on the other hand, it shuts up and locks every heretical mouth that speaks unrighteousness against the Most High.[38]

As the previous citation, St. Maximus understood the canons and councils to have given Rome this supreme authority. However, notice how he adds a further originating principle in the *incarnate Word*? The "throne" of the Apostolic See comes from the "incarnate Word." Also, the above citation has an explicit reference to the *Tu es Petrus* promise of doctrinal indefectibility, which was given to St. Peter the man. It seems impossible to deny that the correlation here made by the promise of Matthew 16, the Apostle Peter, and the Roman primacy was one testifying to a divinely instituted primacy and not one created by the post-apostolic Church through a purely canonical arrangement. The Apostolic See is "from the incarnate Word" and is, "according to the Savior's promise," infallible in her faith and office of key-holding. What promise, other than the one made to St. Peter, could he possibly have had in mind? According to Oxford Professor in Eastern Christianity, Dr. Phil Booth, there are three bases upon which the primacy of Rome rests:

> Maximus, therefore, here emphasizes *three distinct bases* for the Roman Church's preeminence: its status as the guardian of the orthodox faith; its inheritance *through the promise of Christ to Saint Peter* [Matt 16:18–19]; and *its recognition* through conciliar and canonical decree.[39]

Therefore, it is a more plausible interpretation to understand the appeal to canons, definitions of faith, and the councils to be *the*

[38] Maximus, *Opscula theologica et polemica*, 11 (*PG* 91.137–40), in *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, by Adam Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 181 (emphasis added).

[39] Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 271 (emphasis added); see also the same point in *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, by Price, 37.

*recognition by these entities of a prior divinely bestowed authority from Christ himself to St. Peter*, which precedes all of them, indeed, going back to what St. Maximus called "the beginning." It would make very little sense for St. Maximus to say the Roman primacy stretches back historically to the time when the incarnate Word "came down" and stood in the flesh before his Apostles if he didn't think the root of Rome's primacy derived from the person of St. Peter, whom the Lord commissioned as the head of the Church. A Roman primacy which comes from the pure foundation of conciliar canons is an extreme reductionism of St. Maximus's commentary.

One prominent Orthodox patristics scholar Jean-Claude Larchet has attempted to interpret these statements of St. Maximus in a manner compatible with Orthodox ecclesiology. He admits that, for St. Maximus, the Roman See is a "reference and a *norm* in terms of the faith for the other churches"; further, that Rome "has the power to bind and to unbind, that is, to *adjudicate exclusion from the Church and reintegration into it*, not only with regard to the bishops of his church but also with regard to the patriarchs who erred in heterodoxy: they must repent and confess the faith in front of him, and *it is by his decision* that they can be reintegrated into the catholic Church and be readmitted to communion."[40] That is quite an admission by an Orthodox scholar. However, when he shares more of his overall interpretation of St. Maximus, the above admission is severely qualified such that it amounts to no real divinely instituted authority over the Church. For Larchet, St. Maximus has to be understood within the "historical circumstances."[41] All can admit to this, and so a deeper analysis of the merits of his interpretation will follow.

In the first place, he notes how the Roman church is the "largest of all the churches" and its city as the original capital of the Roman Empire.[42] Secondly, both Sts. Peter and Paul founded the church in Rome, and their lives were given up in martyrdom there. With a Pauline and Petrine duality, this is to be distinguished from Vatican ideology with its individuated Petrine supremacy. Third, Larchet is happy to admit that Rome had been perseveringly orthodox from the beginning of the Church to the present.[43] According to Larchet, St. Maximus takes these extraordinary historical accidents as decorations by which he can pragmatically extol the Roman church, and his intention is simply to make note of the utility

[40] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 190 (empahsis added).
[41] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 191.
[42] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 191.
[43] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 193.

of an orthodox patriarchate, *which only happens to be Rome at the time*, in order to garner effort against the imperial *Ekthesis*.[44] Moreover, all the glowing statements about Rome's supremacy and dominion over all the churches is supposed to reflect how St. Maximus simply recognized that, *at this time*, Rome *just so happened* to not fall into the mud of the Monoenergist and Monothelite errors, whereas the Eastern patriarchs did. Indeed, says Larchet, Rome is extolled for its power of binding and loosing perhaps only because, *at this time*, "it alone is in a position to exercise these roles,"[45] the others being disqualified through doctrinal error. In other words, by the sheer accident of Rome being the only see left in a place to defend the truth, she was spoken of in such lofty terms.

According to Larchet, circumstances could have had it that Rome was drenched in heresy, along with three other patriarchs, leaving, say, Antioch to be extolled for her sole right of using the keys of the kingdom over all the churches.[46] Thus, by way of pure historical accident (not denying providence), Rome *just so happened to be* the only right-believing patriarchate at the time. This, speculates Larchet, makes it difficult to pin down precisely what St. Maximus intended since his statements could also be simply reflecting the *random happenstance of Rome being lucky* enough to have kept the faith in contrast to others.[47] To be fair, Larchet does not attempt to make this speculation a conclusive explanation, which he thinks is impossible precisely because of the circumstances.

All in all, St. Maximus, in this view, only extended to Rome these prerogatives so long as Rome kept the orthodox faith, something which was not guaranteed.[48] Thus, there is no "*a priori* papal infallibility."[49] In fact, all the churches, at the end of the day, are equal to each other.[50] As a matter of base principle, says Larchet, the successors of St. Peter have

[44] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 193 (empahsis added).

[45] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 194.

[46] Larchet, being Eastern Orthodox, sees the Roman See having been in error for almost one thousand years now.

[47] Interestingly enough, Larchet is willing to accept that Maximus saw Rome as "unfailingly" faithful to the orthodox faith from the beginning up to his time, but then notes how the conception of a divinely instituted primacy from the *Tu es Petrus* (Matt 16) was a Western idea, and "remained foreign to the East" (see "The Questions of the Roman Primacy in the Thought of Saint Maximus the Confessor," in *Petrine Ministry*, ed. Kasper, 197). It seems entirely out of place for Rome to be the bulwark of orthodoxy only to find out that not only was she wrong about the ecclesiastical primacy, but *as the primate herself* misunderstood it.

[48] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 198.

[49] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 204.

[50] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 205.

no unique "privilege in the definition"[51] of the orthodox faith. He understands that St. Maximus believed that the decrees of popes, as well as councils, depended on the acceptance of everyone, and were thus dependent upon their approval, not least the popes.[52] With further explanation, Larchet comes into close agreement with the encyclical of the patriarchs (1848). All was contingent upon Rome's maintenance of the orthodox faith, and since this is equally contingent for everyone, Larchet sees the *Maximian papacy* to be entirely standing or falling upon that condition. He understands Maximus to hold that Rome has a primacy of honor among equals, which means no bishop, including the Roman bishop, has any special prerogatives when it comes to the dissemination of the Christian faith. This effectively equates the Apostolic See with all the churches. Moreover, Larchet does not think St. Maximus saw the bishop of Rome as a special lineal successor to St. Peter, and even the powers of binding and loosing were given to all the hierarchs. St. Peter was just one recipient among of many others.

Therefore, with all these qualifications given, the Roman primacy ends up being more or less equally leveled with all the other patriarchs, with no privileges in the defining of the faith nor of any strict monopoly on a Petrine succession or that of binding and loosing. And if Rome loses the faith, then she is just as liable as any other Church to be wholly disqualified.[53] Moreover, any of the other patriarchs could potentially replace Rome with the very same prerogatives.

Now, one cannot fault Larchet for being unreasonable. If a Byzantologist knows anything about the literature of his field, it is that the manner of speech must be carefully interpreted and is sometimes different from what stands at face value. Flattery was commonplace. However, in my reading of St. Maximus, I think Larchet has immensely reduced what is an unmistakably clear affirmation of a divinely instituted papacy akin to the definition put forth by Lyons (1274), Florence (1439), and the First Vatican Council (1870). St. Maximus was not simply pointing out the

[51] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 205.

[52] Larchet, "Question of the Roman Primacy," 206.

[53] Admittedly, this may have roots in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans where he warns the Roman church that they can, through apostasy, be broken off the tree of Christ if they do not persevere in faith. A Catholic might say this is speaking to the spiritual state of individuals, and not the hierarchical institution of the Roman See as the head of all the churches. Still, one might press the question of what happens if and when the bishop of Rome, along with the church of Rome, stray from the faith? This, it would seem, is not a welcome possibility in the Catholic system of ecclesiology. The indefectibility of the Roman church, therefore, seems part and parcel with the doctrine of the papacy.

bishop of Rome as a great moral performer of the churches during his day. On the contrary, St. Maximus outright said that the teaching ministry of Rome cannot be overcome by the gates of Hades according to the promise of Jesus Christ. References to the promises of God, all of which involve his faithfulness, are not to be used flippantly, much less in decorative and flattering speech. It would be a grossly irresponsible use of God's holy Word to vest the Roman church with divine attributes if it were a mere transitory feature subservient to all the same conditions as any other church.

St. Maximus's description of Christ's never-changing promise of indestructibility is directly applied to the resilience of Rome's teaching office. Larchet's reductionist reading does not give adequate justice to this element of St. Maximus's words. One can simply refer back to the above citation to Peter the Illustrious, where St. Maximus said it would be useless for Pyrrhus to recant before people such as himself. Why would it be useless? If orthodoxy is all that makes Rome unique, and if St. Maximus himself was orthodox, then Pyrrhus's recantation before anyone who was orthodox was just as good, or similarly as good, as recanting before Rome. Rather, St. Maximus is individuating Rome as the divinely instituted court where the keys of the kingdom effect supremely authoritative judgments, whether of condemnation or acquittal. That seems to make far more sense of the text. Even E. Symonds can recognize that St. Maximus was rooting Rome's "unshaken" faith "from the beginning" as owed to the "promise made to St. Peter."[54] He recognized that what was being claimed here in St. Maximus's references to Matthew 16 ("You are Peter, and on this Rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell will never prevail," etc., etc.) was not a general reference to the indefectibility of the universal Church but a specific reference to the teaching ministry of the See of Rome in light of its Petrine inheritance.[55] Dr. Adam Cooper, a distinguished Maximian scholar, rehearses the argument of Larchet, and critiques it quite accurately:

---

[54] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 196.

[55] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 198. There is another possible reading which affirms that the Roman church's faithfulness was based upon the promise of Christ to St. Peter while rejecting the contemporary Catholic doctrine of the papacy. This reading says that the promise given to St. Peter was simply that the Church as a whole would not be overcome by the gates of hell, and that this is sufficiently proven by any portion of the baptized, perhaps even an individual, who maintains the true confession of faith. Thus, whether that be the bishop of Rome or the bishop of Constantinople, or any sufficiently sizeable part of

> A closer reading of the text however reveals that according to its author's own explicitly theological reasoning, the eminence of the Church of Rome for its confession of faith *is not independent of its preeminence on the basis of the promise of Christ*—of which Rome is the primary and representative recipient. The locative adverb 'αὐτόθι' ("here; there; in this or that specific place") indicating Rome is immediately linked to Christ's promise of the Church's inviolability against the gates of Hades and the conferral of the keys upon Peter (Matt 16:18–19). We can only presume that to the author's way of thinking, the Church in Rome holds these keys for no other reason than what was accepted universally as the Petrine connection to Rome. . . . Rome's preeminence *is not seen exclusively to be conditional upon the orthodoxy of its confession, but is also bound up with the promise of Christ*, his bestowal of the keys to the Church in the person of Peter, and the succession of Peter's episcopacy located in Rome.[56]

So says a Catholic Maximian scholar. Lest it be thought that a bias leads to such a reading, Henry Chadwick recognizes that St. Maximus saw in Rome the "supreme authority of St. Peter's see" and that "he felt, for all truly orthodox minds the ultimate source of judgment and the criterion of catholic communion."[57] A Lutheran scholar who specializes in Maximian studies, Lars Thunberg, concurs with Cooper:

> Maximus simply identified the see of Rome with the Catholic Church and he spoke of "the very holy Church of Rome, the apostolic see, which God the Word [Jesus] Himself and likewise all the holy Synods, according to the holy canons and the sacred definitions, have received, and which owns the power in all things and for all, over all the saints who are there for the whole inhabited earth, and likewise the power to unite and to dissolve" . . . (Patr. Gr. 91, 144 C). . . . "She [the

the baptized, then the promise is thereby shown fulfilled. This interpretation is undermined simply by the fact that St. Maximus, among others, fixed the powers associated with St. Peter and Jesus's promise to the sole teaching ministry of the Roman See.

[56] Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor*, 182–83 (emphasis added).

[57] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62.

> Church of Rome] has the keys of the faith and of the orthodox confession; whoever approaches her humbly, to him is opened the real and unique piety, but she closes her mouth to any heretic who speaks against [divine] justice" (Patr Gr 91, 140). This invites us to evaluate what Maximus had to say about the primacy of the pope. As Fr. Garrigues has clearly shown (in an article in *Istina*, 1976), *Maximus was convinced that Rome would never give way to the pressures of Constantinople.* Once more forced to consider the possibility that in the case of Monothelitism the Romans might accept a union with the Byzantines, he answered through the paradoxical words of St. Paul, and said: "The Holy Spirit condemns . . . even the angels that would proclaim anything which is contrary to the Gospel" (Patr Gr 90, 121). *This implies that he did not want to discuss an improbable hypothesis, but would rather declare that he was prepared to die for the truth.* This statement is a good starting point for a clarification of his own attitude. *His personal experience of the doctrinal position of Rome confirmed his conviction that the promises of our Lord to Peter were applicable to the Church that preserved his relics.* Thus, for him the communion of the Churches expressed itself as "a Roman communion," a communion with the bishop of Rome.[58]

Returning to the story of Pyrrhus's recantation and absolution at Rome by Pope St. Theodore, even this was, unfortunately, short-lived as Pyrrhus reversed course once again and was then deposed from office and excommunicated from the Church by the pope,[59] another instance of Rome's supreme jurisdiction. Thereupon, Pope St. Theodore continued to hold Paul II of Constantinople accountable to condemn the *Ekthesis*. When Paul would not comply, St. Theodore also deposed him. After this, then emperor, Constans II, had a new edict called the *Typos* published which, like Heraclius's *Psephos*, forbade any dogmatic assertion of either one or two wills in Christ and left all doctrine to that which had been handed down through tradition.[60]

---

[58] Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1985), 25–26 (emphasis added).

[59] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 99.

[60] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 275.

However, this new policy of silence or indecisiveness was not sufficient for Rome nor for St. Maximus. A larger move toward the convocation of a council to make a universal judgment against Monothelitism was in order. Pope St. Theodore took initiative to do precisely the opposite of what Constans II ordered and set plans for such a council to be held in Rome in 649 to make sure a decision was made regarding one or two wills in Christ.

Passing away before the council could materialize, he left it to his successor, Pope St. Martin, to convene (at his own authoritative bidding)[61] and preside. This council was held in the Lateran Basilica in 649. Consisting primarily in Italian bishops,[62] this council was "resolved to declare open war on eastern attempts at dogmatic compromise."[63] Against an "ecclesiastical suzerainty of Constantinople,"[64] Pope St. Martin implied a "denial of imperial authority in doctrinal matters," and, conversely, "*the supremacy of the papacy* in matters of faith."[65] The goal of this council was to pronounce on two operations and wills in Christ.

This council never got numbered with the Great Seven Ecumenical Councils but, for what it is worth, Lateran (649) affords a tremendous amount of evidence for how the papacy understood itself and how the Eastern testimonies of this time coincided. At the second session, St. Stephen of Dor, who was a bishop and disciple of the great St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, lamented over how the whole Church in the East was being troubled by the Monothelite error. He then gave what he understood to be the only recourse of hope:

> So that we might "fly away" and announce these things to the *see that rules and presides over all others* (I mean your sovereign and supreme see), in quest of healing for the wound inflicted. It has been *accustomed* to perform this authoritatively *from the first and from of old*, on the basis of its *apostolic and canonical authority*, for the reason, evidently, that the truly great Peter, the head of the apostles, was deemed worthy not only to be entrusted, alone out

[61] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 142n34.

[62] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 69.

[63] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 364.

[64] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 364.

[65] Catherine Cubitt, "The Lateran Council of 649 as an Ecumenical Council," in *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*, eds. Richard Price and Mary Whitby (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 140 (emphasis added).

> of all, with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" for both opening them deservedly to those who believe and shutting them justly to those who do not believe in the gospel of grace, but also because he was the first to be entrusted with shepherding the sheep of the whole catholic church. As the text runs, "Peter, do you love me? Shepherd my sheep." And again, because he possessed more than all others, in an exceptional and unique way, *firm and unshakeable faith* in our Lord, [he was deemed worthy] to turn and strengthen his comrades and spiritual brethren when they were wavering, since providentially he had been adorned by the God who became incarnate for our sake *with power and priestly authority over them all.*[66]

Some Orthodox have read these passages as simply Byzantine flattery. However, that explanation loses the power to persuade in light of the fact that Stephen was not so much directly describing Roman primacy in general but was rather interpreting the New Testament, particularly the famous Petrine texts, and then applied the prerogatives given to St. Peter to contemporary Rome. More to the point, when he referred to "apostolic and canonical authority," it would simply be irresponsible to use these words and then immediately proceed into something fictitious or bearing only legendary value. So here, an Eastern bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, who represented the mind of St. Sophronius, made an appeal to apostolic and canonical foundations and then proceeded to exegete the divinely inspired texts of the New Testament as a grounding basis for those foundations in the Apostle St. Peter and his See. If it were a case of Byzantine flattery, then it would entail that this holy man of God tried to eisegetically exploit passages from God's most holy Word that he actually knew had nothing to do with Peter's ministry in Rome, and then proceeded to call this apostolic and canonical.

Moreover, Stephen was calling upon the Apostolic See to bring healing to the wounds of the Church. How could there be any healing of the Church by Rome unless the latter were empowered to confront the wound, which consisted in Eastern hierarchs overstepping their boundaries to enforce false teaching? Stephen was appealing to a power that belonged by right to the Apostolic See to bring the sort of healing that was needed to such a wound involving hierarchical decrees and disciplinary

[66] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Lateran 649*, 143–44 (emphasis added).

motions by other patriarchs. If these credentials were merely a flattery, then Stephen would be conjuring a pseudo-doctor (since it would simply be flattery) to combat a real authority. But that is unreasonable. Therefore, it is much to be preferred that he was appealing to the real power of binding and loosing (keys), the real authority of shepherding, and the real right to define doctrine held by the pope, as carrying the singular and unique Petrine prerogatives listed in the New Testament, in order to meet the Eastern fiasco with the force of authoritative discipline. This is confirmed by what he proceeded to state aloud as being said to him by his Patriarch St. Sophronius when the latter instructed the former to travel to Rome in order to procure a definitive Roman answer on the Monothelite dilemma:

> You are not to desist from vigorous exhortation and entreaty, until with apostolic wisdom they [Rome] *bring their judgment to a victorious conclusion* and issue canonically a total refutation of the outlandish doctrines, lest, as says the apostle, these any longer "spread like cancer."[67]

St. Sophronius, too, bears witness to the supreme doctrinal authority of Rome. He had already produced enough material to refute the heretics. What was left was for the chief pastor of the Church to ratify what the orthodox clergy of the world already knew to be true. Also, this language of "victorious conclusion" harkens to a deliberate judgment on the faith, much unlike the hesitant format of Honorius's letter to Sergius. Once again, Dr. Philip Booth recognizes here in the words of Stephen a clear acceptance of the idea that Rome's primacy was "guaranteed in the promise of Christ to Saint Peter,"[68] and not something of purely canonical origin.

To add to this, we have in the same second session certain Greek monks who spoke aloud toward the pope. They stated toward Pope St. Martin that "under Christ you are the *supreme head of the churches*."[69] They were unmistakably clear about the headship of Jesus Christ, which is a real one, and yet St. Martin's headship over the universal Church was next under Christ's. That is akin to what is meant by the famous "Vicar of

[67] Price, *The Acts of the Council of Lateran 649*, 145 (emphasis added).

[68] Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 273.

[69] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 153 (emphasis added). Even if this letter could be questioned as to authenticity, the value of its content is here referenced for the sole sake that the Lateran Synod accepted it into the *Acts*.

Christ" title singularly applied to the pope in later ages. To add yet again to these Greek voices, we have the appeal to Pope St. Martin in a letter from Sergius, the Primate of Cyprus, which was read aloud. It states:

> Christ our God has founded your apostolic see, O sacred head, as a divinely fixed and immovable support and conspicuous inscription of the faith. For you, as the divine Word truly declared without deceit, are Peter, and on your foundation the pillars of the church are fixed: to you he committed the keys of the heavens and decreed that you are to bind and loose with authority on earth and in heaven.[70]

Equally revealing is the appeal of the North African bishops, which merely copied the reply letters of Pope St. Innocent I to the Councils of Carthage and Milevis in 416 in their own statement, which decreed that any doctrinal question that arises in the Church can't be authoritatively settled until it is reviewed by the authority of Rome.[71] Their letter read aloud at the council included:

> No one can doubt that at the apostolic see there is a great and unfailing spring giving back flowing streams for all Christians, from which little rivers progress in streams, watering the whole world of Christendom most abundantly. For, in honor of the most blessed Peter, the instructions of the Fathers also decreed for it every particular reverence in searching out the things of God, which [matters] ought completely and carefully to be examined by the apostolic overseer himself, whose ancient duty is as much to condemn evils as to approve the praiseworthy. For it was sanctioned by the ancient rules that anything that occurred, even in the remote or far-flung provinces, should not be dealt with or accepted before [and] *unless it had been brought to the notice of your blessed Mother See, so that it might be confirmed by its authority.*[72]

---

[70] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 158 (emphasis added).

[71] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 162.

[72] Pope St. Innocent I, "The African Churches to the Holy Roman Bishop Theodore," cited in *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early* Church, eds. Neil and Allen, 201–02. Sections of this letter were word-for-word echoes of the letters of the Carthaginian synods to Pope

In a statement made at the council, St. Martin recounted the event of Paul II's condemnation by his predecessor St. Theodore, and stated that it was by the "*apostolic authority*" of the Roman church that Paul was so judged.[73] Pope St. Martin further defined this apostolic authority as that which was given to Peter, "*who alone, above all others*, was deemed worthy to receive in trust from the King of kings, Christ God, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so as to open it deservedly for those whose belief in the Lord is orthodox and *to close it to all the unorthodox heretics who persist in their heresy*."[74] A clearer statement showing that Rome's condemnation of heretics or pardoning of penitents is "above all others" one can scarcely find. While each and every bishop has a certain jurisdiction over his flock, such that he can bind and loose at his discretion, the successor of St. Peter enjoys a singular privilege of having the power to bind and loose over "all others."

In the same vein, Pope St. Martin wrote a series of letters to the East which notified everyone that he was commissioning John, bishop of Philadelphia (within the Jerusalem patriarchate), with the orders to ordain clergy who subscribe to the orthodox decrees of Lateran (649) and to depose those holding office who dissent or were illegally ordained. This was an attempt by the pope to use his "apostolic authority" to help aid the Christians by issuing pastoral mandates in the internal affairs of the East.[75] In the pope's letter to John himself, he described the nature of the commission and the legitimate authority that grounds it. He wrote that John must

> correct the things which are wanting, and appoint Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons in every city of those which are subject to the See both of Jerusalem and of Antioch; we charge you to do this in every way, *in virtue of the Apostolic authority (auctoritate) which was given us by the Lord in the person of most holy Peter*, prince of the Apostles; on

St. Innocent at the beginning of the fifth century, attempting to manifest the tradition of Africa's deference to the authority of Rome.

[73] Felix III used the very same terminology in his deposition of Acacius in 484.

[74] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 186.

[75] Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1995), 60–61; Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*, trans. Ethel Broido (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 433.

> account of the necessities of our time, and the pressure of the nations.[76]

This is an unmistakable claim by Pope St. Martin to a singular authority given to St. Peter and his successors with sacred rights to exercise jurisdiction in the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch. Astonishingly, Abbé Vladimir Guettée criticized the pope for unlawfully usurping an authority that didn't belong to him, and even erroneously declared that his predecessors never claimed to have this Petrine power.[77] This had already been asserted, as we saw, by Pope St. Theodore with St. Stephen of Dor. This time, a new person, John of Philadelphia, was the Vicar of the Apostolic See in Eastern territories.[78] This effort of the Lateran Coun-

---

[76] Pope St. Martin, Mansi 10.806, quoted in *The See of St. Peter, The Rock of the Church, The Source of Jurisdiction, and Centre of Unity*, by Thomas William Allies (London: Burns & Lambert, 1850), 120; slightly modified (emphasis added). See full letter in English in *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church*, eds. Neil and Allen, 210–18. In one letter of Pope St. Martin to Pantaleon (see Neil and Allen, eds., *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church*, 222–26; *PL* 87.169–74; Mansi 10.819–24), a clergyman in Jerusalem, he states that he lacked the "power" (*potestas*) to appoint the patriarch of Jerusalem, and so limited himself in commissioning a vicar of apostolic and Petrine authority to ordain at least bishops, priests, and deacons. This way the flock of Christ at least had the sacramental economy of salvation and the true faith available to them. It is likely that the lack of power here was a lack of ability to organize a more proper election of a patriarch through a synod (or at least three bishops) in light of the difficulties brought upon by the invasion of Muslims, who would have certainly been camped in Jerusalem. Just before St. Sophronius had died, the Muslim army led by Caliph Omar (see L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 269) broke down the gates to Jerusalem. In the same letter, the pope affirms the power to ordain in Jerusalemite and Antiochene jurisdictions, and so this first reading is more probable than any other. However, if he meant he lacked the power to appoint the patriarch of Jerusalem because the jurisdiction of the Apostolic See was forbidden by law to do such a thing, then Pope St. Theodore would certainly be suggesting something at odds with what the Papal West would claim about the extent of Rome's jurisdiction. The claim to have jurisdiction to appoint an Eastern patriarch was unmistakable in the letters of Pope Hadrian II to the Council of Constantinople (879–89), which claim was left in the Greek version of the *Acts* by Photius himself; see Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 229n176.

[77] Fr. Vladimir Guettée, DD, *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867), 243.

[78] Richard Price makes note of the boldness of "direct Roman jurisdiction" here claimed by Pope Martin in Antioch and Jerusalem, and even likens the act of Martin ordaining dyothelite clergy in the East to the pope creating his own "'uniate' Church in the East," (see *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 397). In the letter of Pope St. Martin to John of Philadelphia, the former explained how his predecessor, St. Theodore, had authoritatively intervened in the East to both depose and elect new bishops (see letter in *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church*, eds. Neil and Allen, 213).

cil by Pope St. Martin was certainly all-embracing, and he intended the decrees of said council to be sent to the universal Church.[79]

So clear are the claims to universal jurisdiction that even Fr. Vladimir Guettée, acknowledging the fact that both Popes St. Martin and St. Theodore are saints in the Orthodox Church, nevertheless accuses them of seizing universal power over the Church by an "alleged" succession back to St. Peter.[80] In the end, Lateran (649) had next to no chance at being an *ecumenical council* in the face of the Church's hitherto policy of ceding the right of convocation to the emperor. The popes were content to omit it from the official list of ecumenical councils in light of acceptance of the Council of Constantinople (681), which decrees the very same content of doctrine.

Even so, St. Maximus is the only one who is on the record explicitly claiming Lateran to be the Sixth Ecumenical Council, whereas Pope St. Martin comes short of this,[81] despite his understanding of its decrees as universally binding. Nevertheless, the formal anathema that Lateran placed upon the Church is considered, especially by Roman Catholics, universally binding. In fact, when Emperor Constantine IV (678) wrote to Pope Donus for the convocation of the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (681), it was Pope St. Agatho, successor to Pope Donus, who sent a report back to the emperor with the decisions of his Roman synod.[82] In that report, St. Agatho refers to Lateran (649):

> This rule of the pure catholic and apostolic confession was also *taught synodically* and defended resolutely by the *holy council* that convened under Pope Martin of apostolic memory.... At this council the predecessors of our insignificance convened, and... preached the apostolic confession they had received... unambiguously and *without the error of novelty.*[83]

This letter of St. Agatho was accepted at the Sixth Ecumenical Council some thirty years later in 681, and so can be said to have ecumenical

[79] "He made copies and sent them through all the districts of East and West, broadcasting them by the hands of the orthodox faithful" (see *Liber Pontificalis*, 68–69). Also, see Cubitt, "The Lateran Council of 649," in *Chalcedon in Context*, eds. Price and Whitby, 143.

[80] Guettée, *The Papacy*, 243.

[81] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 67n26.

[82] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 103–04.

[83] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 104 (emphasis added).

value. Such acceptance would take its time as just after the Council of 649 was closed, both Pope St. Martin and St. Maximus were arrested for disobeying the authority of the Roman Empire and were sent to the East to face trial and condemnation. St. Martin suffered martyrdom, and St. Maximus died in exile. What further can be said about Lateran (649) is that all of its contents were accepted by both pope and St. Maximus, and so every last bit which supports the position of the Apostolic See is upheld by these saintly men who are held in high esteem by both Catholic and Orthodox communions.

*Chapter Nineteen*

# St. Maximus the Confessor and Papal Infallibility

ORTHODOX READERS ARE AWARE of the extolling commentary of St. Maximus on the orthodoxy and supreme authority of the Roman See, but then point their finger to a certain episode at the end of the saint's life when he was under arrest and on trial in Constantinople, where it appears he broke all commitments to Rome. When news came of the pope's "imminent plan" to join the communion of the heretical patriarchs, St. Maximus is said to have been willing to accept that possibility of Rome defecting from the faith, and consequently to withdraw himself from Rome's communion. Many explain this account as a sort of slam dunk against the Catholic apologist who might cite St. Maximus in support of the idea of papal infallibility or supremacy. According to Ed Siecienski, St. Maximus may have had a high view of Rome's primacy but not so far as to say she was guaranteed to be always free from error.[1] This is a reasonable inference. However, the story has some details which are often missing, which may lead to more than one way of understanding St. Maximus on the primacy of Rome.

[1] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 153 (emphasis added). See also Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 274.

In the first place, we need to make some distinctions. To recap from the previous chapter, St. Maximus claimed in *Opusculum 11* that the orthodoxy of Rome is divinely protected by the special promise of Jesus Christ to the Apostle Peter. Another English translation of this has the same idea but is worded differently: "The Roman Church . . . as being—according to the Savior's promise—*forever invincible against the gates of hell*, as possessing the keys to the Orthodox faith."[2] That appears to be a very straightforward claim of Roman infallibility. On the other hand, the developed doctrine of papal infallibility as codified at the First Vatican Council was far more refined than this claim of St. Maximus. The council rejected that the pope himself is always and generally infallible in all that he teaches. Nowhere in the decree on the pope's infallibility is it said that the pope himself *could not* become a formal heretic. What is taught, rather, is that when the pope proclaims a binding dogmatic teaching (on faith or morals) to the whole Church through the mode of being the universal pastor and teacher of all Christians (*ex cathedra*), and not as a private theologian nor even as patriarch of the West, he enjoys the charism of infallibility.

So, we have St. Maximus's quite general and indefinite claim of Roman infallibility, which appears to exclude even the possibility of a pope becoming a heretic in any sense, and then we have the decree on papal infallibility in 1870, which was far more defined, limited, and specifically conditioned. We must recognize this distinction between St. Maximus and Vatican I, since the distinction is apparent. The Catholic Church theologically refined the ancient and patristic conception of St. Peter's sacred rights, as invested by Christ (*Tu es Petrus*), and came to recognize specific conditions wherein these rights are applicable to the universal Church. The pope's private opinions could be entirely erroneous, for example, and that wouldn't impugn the sacred prerogatives of the pope's infallibility any more than the possibility, held by the Eastern Orthodox, that individual bishops or even regional synods of bishops being fallible prohibits an ecumenical council from being infallible.[3] The Orthodox Church ascribes a fallible mode of teaching to bishops individually but is willing to ascribe infallibility when they are assembled in a council. One might argue that individual Apostles could have erred, as St. Peter did

[2] Maximus, *Opusculum* 11, in *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 110 (emphasis added).

[3] Decree 2 and 12, *Confession of Dositheus*, in *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John H. Leith (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), 486 and 496.

in Antioch (Gal 2) as described by St. Paul, but that does not preclude the power to write infallible Scripture by each Apostle nor their capacity to teach infallibly at the Council of Jerusalem (49). Both Catholics and Orthodox, therefore, can make distinctions and apply specified conditions for the activation of divine infallibility. Past statements which were indefinite and general as to the infallibility of the pope or Church do not forbid later clarifications that take from the undefined a much more clarified definition. For the matter at hand, however, a thorough investigation will need to be conducted to determine whether St. Maximus really did think that the pope could err and contaminate his communion with heresy.

As for Maximus's trial, the backstory[4] begins when he was arrested in Rome and brought to Constantinople, where he eventually stood trial (655), at which time the Monothelite Peter was patriarch of the church in Constantinople. A year later Maximus was brought to Bizya to conduct a disputation over the issue of wills and operations in Christ. Despite high points of hope for reconciliation, St. Maximus ultimately ended up rejecting all attempts at doctrinal harmony with Constantinople and was sent into exile.

Along with him, Pope St. Martin was arrested in Rome but himself faced martyrdom. However, his successor, Pope Eugenius (654), marked a change in Rome's zeal against the *Typos*, which had forbidden dogmatic assertion of either one or two wills or operations in Christ (a policy of silence on the matter). It was under Eugenius's successor, Pope St. Vitalian (657–672), that the Roman See returned to communion with Constantinople through its hierarch, Peter. It was upon the accession of this pope when his *synodikon* (statement of faith) was accepted by Peter of Constantinople (known as a Monothelite), and consequently, St. Vitalian's name was inscribed into the diptychs of the Divine Liturgy in Constantinople. The Patriarch Peter responded with a letter which included excerpts that made clear that, yet again, Constantinople was now altering its view to a *one and two wills and operations in Christ* model.[5] This letter was condemned by the future Council of Constantinople (681), and Peter was anathematized as a heretic.[6] For unknown reasons, Pope St. Vitalian did not recognize heresy in the document and "recognized

[4] Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 305–28.

[5] Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 321n191.

[6] Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 162.

Peter," taking as "neutral a position as possible."[7] What is the nature of that acceptance, and did it involve any explicit teaching of heretical propositions on the pope's part? Also, was St. Vitalian's own *synodikon* to Constantinople a heretical document? Whatever was in that letter was sufficiently in line with what Peter himself believed.

These questions stand at the heart of the story where St. Maximus the Confessor is said to have shown himself no supporter of papal infallibility. According to Byzantinist Andrew J. Ekonomou, "Vitalian's *synodikon* to Peter may have stretched Rome's tolerance of Monothelitism to the brink of compromising its doctrinal orthodoxy."[8] This seems most evident in that the Emperor Constans II (following the Monothelite agenda) had sailed to the West to visit Rome and the pope, and there was no hostility. He was received by St. Vitalian in the basilica of Julius.[9] The pope even gave him Holy Communion in St. Peter's. At the Council of Constantinople (681), "the ambiguous behavior of pope Vitalian was justified by the fact that the emperor always made orthodox statements in his presence."[10] Concerning Peter of Constantinople's acceptance of St. Vitalian's *synodikon*, J. N. D. Kelly writes that the pope "*maintained the Roman position* but was deliberately conciliatory, playing down the doctrinal issue and passing over the Lateran synod of 649 *in silence*."[11] Jeffrey Richards might stretch to the limits of kindness when he writes that "Vitalian achieved that elusive *modus vivendi* without sacrificing the points of theological principle that Rome held dear."[12] Of course, he eventually proved himself thoroughly orthodox, since he would later reject the *synodikon* of the successors of Peter and, as a result, the next patriarch of Constantinople, Theodore I (677–679) sought to scratch St. Vitalian's name off the diptychs[13] in Constantinople for clearly being "*insufficiently Monothelete*."[14]

---

[7] J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 311.

[8] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 162.

[9] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 162.

[10] John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 308.

[11] J. N. D. Kelly, "Vitalian," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 76 (emphasis added).

[12] Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 2014), 201.

[13] J. N. D. Kelly, "Vitalian," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 76.

[14] Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 276; George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 78.

St. Vitalian was referred to in "blessed memory" at the Sixth Council and is a saint in both Orthodox and Catholic communions. As to whether he was a formally heretical bishop of Rome, the evidence is not sufficient to say one way or the other, but the scales certainly tip in the direction of negative. Two significant weights influence the tipping of those scales. First, the debate over actions, wills, and energies in Christ all came with a great deal of ambiguity, if no specified and elaborated clarity was given. As a result, one could be orthodox or heterodox using terminology of either one or two operations/energies or wills.[15] And secondly, the Church never brought St. Vitalian to condemnation, nor is there a record of his confessing a heretical proposition, and neither a record of his returning to orthodox confession from a formerly held error. It is entirely possible that he wrote what he thought was a thorough enough exposition of the two-operations and two-wills doctrine in his *synodikon* (of which we have no copy) to Peter of Constantinople, and the latter's acceptance of it proved to him that the patriarch was sufficiently orthodox.

In the grand scheme of things, if reading a perfectly orthodox meaning into a written statement which is actually heretical (upon finding the intent of the author) amounts to being a heretic, then one would have to say that St. Maximus, Pope John IV, Pope St. Theodore, Pope St. Martin, and Pope St. Agatho all died heretics because they either relentlessly defended the letters of Honorius or assumed his orthodoxy.[16] After all, it was this kind of discrepancy that was supposedly found by the bishops at Constantinople II (553) when they accused Vigilius of "heresy" when he thought the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Mari the Persian passed the test of Cyrillian orthodoxy. The bishops in the council thought it was actually

[15] For a detailed overview of the Monoenergism/Monothelite controversy and particularly how easy it could be to be truly and objectively orthodox while differing in terminology, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 62–74. Richard Price goes so far as to say that the Dyoenergists and Dyothelites (representing the eventual orthodox terminology) misrepresented their Monoenergist and Monothelite opponents; see Richard Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), viii; see also 18–58 for Price's extensive review of the perspectives of all the players involved in the controversy.

[16] While I have to respect the decision of the Council of Constantinople III (681) on the letter of Honorius, it seems plausible that the magisterium could reopen the question of not only whether Honorius was a heretic but even if the contents of his letters were necessarily heretical. The defense of John IV and Maximus seems to be convincing.

Nestorian. Pope Vigilius thought it was Chalcedonian, and that was why he defended it. Was he really in heresy at that point?

Bringing things back to the seventh century, both the patriarch St. Sophronius and St. Maximus themselves were not perfectly consistent with the "silence equals heretical" rule.[17] Although we have no evidence of any formal commitment by St. Vitalian to a single heretical proposition,[18] it should go without saying that even if there were, this does not clash with the Vatican's doctrine of papal infallibility.

Now that the backstory has been given, on to the famous story of St. Maximus's supposed denial of papal infallibility. In the *Record* of his trial, he was asked what he would do if the Romans, through the papal *apocrisiarii* (representatives of the pope stationed in Constantinople) prepared to commune with the Monothelites in Constantinople.[19] His first response was that the acts of the papal *apocrisiarii* do not reflect the beliefs of the pope himself and so do not necessarily stain the Roman See. He stated:

> Those [Papal representative] won't prejudice the see of Rome in any way, even if they do communicate, *because they haven't brought a letter to the Patriarch.*[20] And I'll never be

[17] When Sergius of Constantinople wrote his *Psephos* (in response to the Alexandrine "Pact of Union"), which attempted to exclude assertions of two energies and wills in Christ (i.e., a silence), St. Sophronius and St. Maximus were, at least for a time, in support of this moderate position. In the studies of Lars Thunberg, taking much from the French scholar and theologian Fr. Venance Grumel (1890–1967), he came to the conclusion that St. Maximus and St. Sophronius "both seem to respect the *Psephos* of Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople, forbidding any mentioning of one or two wills" (Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2nd ed. [Chicago: Open Court, 1995], 9). See Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, 349–56; Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 47; Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 45–47. St. Maximus the Confessor, *The Ascetic Life, The Four Centuries on Charity*, trans. Polycarp Sherwood, O.S.B., S.T.D. (New York: The Newman Press, 1995), 14–18; Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

[18] Fr. Andrew Louth, Professor of Byzantine and Patristics studies, writes: "Martin's immediate successors—Eugenius I and Vitalian—seem to have been compromised: although *neither of them formally accepted the Typos*, both of them were in communion with the Monothelite Patriarch Peter" (in *Maximus the Confessor*, 17–18 (emphasis added). Louth seems to go too far in his explanation on behalf of Eugenius, who came short of communion with Peter; see J. N. D. Kelly, "Eugenius," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 75.

[19] Allen and Neil, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile*, 63.

[20] This criteria of the beliefs of the bishop of Rome, rather than his legates in Constantinople,

> convinced that the Romans will be united with the Byzantines, *unless* they confess that our Lord and God by nature wills and works salvation according to each [of the natures] from which he is, and in which he is, as well as which he is.[21]

Here, St. Maximus was firm in his conviction that he would never be convinced that the pope would subscribe to the heresy. To say that one will *never* be convinced is a strong assertion, exhibiting an unusual confidence. What could possibly have caused St. Maximus to make such a statement? The answer is not difficult to find. He had already stated, quite explicitly, that the orthodoxy of Rome was based upon Christ's promises to St. Peter. Since God cannot lie, and Christ is God, then St. Maximus clearly upheld the inference that Rome could never err. As the late Maximian scholar Vittorio Croce said, St. Maximus held the Apostolic See of Rome as the "foundation of the faith of all Christians, indefectible and indestructible, the infallible measuring-rod of orthodoxy and heresy."[22] Notice, also, that St. Maximus differentiated what the papal representatives do versus what the pope does himself. What the legates might say, do, judge, or agree upon might not accurately reflect the position of the pope, and thus the real question is what the pope himself believes as witnessed in a "letter" or testimony.

Moving along in the trial, St. Maximus's examiners were not satisfied with his confidence in Rome, and so they pressed on and insisted that he answer what he would do in the hypothetical situation where Rome did subscribe to the heresy. St. Maximus responded: "The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle, condemns even angels who innovate in some way contrary to what is preached."[23] This answer has caused some readers to infer that St. Maximus was quite ready to anathematize the Roman See for heresy.

However, we would do best to take caution in how to interpret this answer. It comes from St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, wherein he urged his readers that God could theoretically anathematize all the Apostles or even angels from heaven if they change the Holy Gospel (Gal 1:8–9). Is it

---

also shows that when Maximus attributed divine status to the Roman church and her teaching ministry, he had in mind, chiefly, the voice of her bishop.

[21] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions*, 63 (emphasis added).

[22] Vittorio Croce, *Tradizione e ricerca: il metodo teologico di san Massimo il Confessore* (Milan, 1974), 125, translated by Aidan Nicholas in *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1993), 56.

[23] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions*, 63.

possible for an angel sent from heaven to alter God's message? St. Paul's warning might be read, as St. Jerome speculated, as hyperbole.[24] In such a reading, we can assume that St. Paul does not literally intend to say that angels sent from God can overthrow God's message but to exaggeratively suppose such a thing would place the angel underneath the anathema of God. How much more culpable, the argument goes, would mere human beings be who overthrow God's message?[25] Realistically speaking, blessed angels cannot sin nor can they thwart the message given to them to deliver. As St. Basil wrote: "They [angels] protect their own dignity by remaining steadfast in the good, and while they have freedom of choice, they never fail to attend to what is truly good."[26] St. Vincent of Lérins takes the passage to mean that St. Paul appealed to what is impossible, that is, heretical angels, in order to emphasize the gravity of the truth.[27] It would be extremely difficult to imagine how, on Maximian principles, the glorified angels could sin, on account of their free and irreversible attraction to the Good.[28] Although less difficult, it remains a question as to whether St. Maximus was truly envisioning the potential of the Apostles to apostatize along with angels. In any case, even if this is hyperbolic language, the underlying message is clear: the truth is what validates itself, not persons. In that case, St. Maximus was willing to put the truth above the Roman church, as the former is no respecter of persons. Does this answer given by him demolish everything he has hitherto written about the divinely promised protection and doctrinal supremacy of the Roman See? We'll return to that further below.

After more back and forth with his examiners, St. Maximus could not give way to any of the adjustments that were being made by

---

[24] St. Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 73.

[25] Theodoret of Cyrus argues that St. Paul did not literally mean angels could falsify God's message; see Theodoret, *Commentarius in omnes b. Pauli epistolas*, 1:330, ed. C. Marriot (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1852), 330, reference found in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, ed. Mark J. Edwards (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 7

[26] Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 72.

[27] Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 8.22, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 11, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. C. A. Heurtley (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3506.htm. Interestingly enough, St. Vincent almost appears to say that the whole company of the Apostles might err, but that doesn't appear to be his major point.

[28] See also St. John Damascene on the fixity of angelic free-will in *De Fide Orthodoxa*, book 2.3.

Constantinople, and he stood his ground. An alternative way of explaining the wills and operations came from Peter of Constantinople (*one and two wills and operations*), and was included in the *synodikon* he sent to Pope Eugene I (and which was left to be dealt with by his successor St. Vitalian), but this was unacceptable for St. Maximus.[29] In his letter to Anastasius, his disciple, St. Maximus communicated a certain message that he had been given from the patriarch of Constantinople, which basically asserted that since Rome had joined the communion of the other four patriarchs, St. Maximus was bound to join the Catholic Church represented by the unified Pentarchy.[30] To this he responded by inquiring into what the particular confession of faith was that unified the Pentarchy, and if it was orthodox, he would commune.[31] Notice here the emphasis on the content of confession, regardless of what Rome was doing or saying. He says:

> The God of all pronounced that the catholic church was the correct and *saving confession of the faith* in him when he called Peter blessed because of the terms in which he had made proper confession of him. But let me learn *the confession* on which the unity of *all the churches* was effected, and if it was effected properly I shall not be estranged from it.[32]

Ultimately, thought St. Maximus, the rock of the Church is St. Peter's confession of faith, and whoever holds to it is in the true Church. If all the patriarchs, that is, the Pentarchy, and even if "all the churches" had violated this saving confession, then St. Maximus would have been content to keep to the saving confession whether it merited the anathema of the whole institutional Church or not. In fact, it is recorded that St. Maximus even said the following: "Even if the whole universe holds communion with the patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teaching."[33] This is quite interesting, since

---

[29] Booth states that both St. Sophronius and St. Maximus, at one time, held to something very similar that Constantinople was now proposing (see *Crisis of Empire*, 217, 236, and 322).

[30] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions*, 121.

[31] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions*, 121.

[32] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions*, 121.

[33] Sinaita Anastasius, *The Life of Our Holy Father St. Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Fr. Christopher Birchall (Boston: Holy Transfiguration, 1982), 62; Laurent Cleenewerck, *His*

this was not merely a supposition of papal apostasy, but both Pentarchic and "universal" apostacy. Thus, while the Orthodox might be satisfied to find here in St. Maximus's answer a certain key to show how he was not in support of papal infallibility, it would seem that St. Maximus's answer was so extreme that it also showed no indication that he held any form of visible ecclesiastical infallibility to begin with, let alone that of the pope or the patriarchs. I understand some in contemporary theology have developed a transitory theory of the truth, that is, that the truth is wherever it is to be whenever that happens to be, but it is never given criteria in a fixed embodiment or subject. And if St. Maximus was venturing into speculating that the whole world can err, then he was venturing into that kind of epistemological disadvantage.

How serious was St. Maximus about the indispensability of the faith over and against ecclesial authority? He was willing to be the last man alone with the truth rather than join the world of heretics. What are the implications, therefore, of the papal claims of the Catholic Church in relation to this firm conviction of St. Maximus? Does this willingness on the part of St. Maximus to resort to himself as the final criteria of orthodoxy completely remove all foundations for using him as a witness to the doctrine of papal supremacy and infallibility?

It should be recalled that the claims made by St. Maximus on behalf of the Roman See were not of the kind which viewed Rome as merely conditionally or accidentally the rock of the Church. Some Orthodox, such as Larchet,[34] have attempted to show that St. Maximus's many compliments of Rome were simply based on the unprincipled chance that Rome happened to be supremely orthodox *at that time*. However, his words simply do not demonstrate that. As many have argued, "Maximus clearly placed his hope in the eternal orthodoxy and superior authority of the See of Rome,"[35] and justified that hope by the very promise and word of the Lord Jesus Christ.[36] The reality of possessing the right confession and the reality of the Roman church are not two realities which

*Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* (Washington, DC: Euclid University Press, 2007), 197.

[34] Patristics professor Bronwen Neil also agrees with Larchet; see Neil, *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs: The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006), 76.

[35] Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body*, 196.

[36] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 198. Aiden Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, second edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 217;

accidentally intersect in salvation history, according to the previous statements of St. Maximus. Rather, these two realities are inextricably linked, co-inhere in one another, and are divinely guaranteed. And yet, his answers during his exile, though initially showing unswerving confidence of Rome's orthodoxy, appear to have the pendulum swing all the way in the opposite direction such that now he was willing to exclude himself from the pope, all the patriarchs, all the Churches, and the *whole universe* on account of the Truth!

Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément interpreted St. Maximus as holding to the possibility of St. Peter's confession being divorced, even if briefly, from St. Peter's official successor.[37] One wonders if, besides Roman infallibility, St. Maximus now began to question both Pentarchic and ecclesial infallibilities as well, unless he thought the Church would be preserved in his own individual person. All of this suggests that he was answering in the extreme.

If St. Peter's successor is capable of violating St. Peter's faith, then the former cannot be considered the object of a divinely promised and fixed principle of unity, nor a fixed criterion of truth. This is essentially what Larchet argues, effectively excluding St. Maximus from any sort of witness to a divinely instituted papacy. However, he did once say concerning Rome that it "is in no way overcome by the gates of Hades, *according to the very promise of the Savior*."[38] But we are still left with this insurmountable dilemma of St. Maximus at one time asserting that Rome is protected in its faith by the divine promise and then later seemingly allowing that he himself could be the sole carrier of the truth against Rome, the patriarch, and the whole world.

Dr. Philip Booth holds that when St. Maximus was confronted with the prospect of a "heretical" Rome, he "*reinterprets* the promise of Christ to Saint Peter so as to guarantee not Roman power or preeminence but rather the permanence of the orthodox faith."[39] In other words, St. Maximus changed his mind. He at one time thought the promise of Christ meant, specifically, the infallibility of the See of Peter, and then later reformed his opinion to hold that the indestructible rock of

---

Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 271; Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 37; Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, 157.

[37] Olivier Clément, *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 35–37.

[38] Maximus, *PG* 91.137C–140B, in "St. Maximus the Confessor on Priesthood, Hierarchy, and Rome," by Adam Cooper, *Pro Ecclesia* 10.3 (2001): 359 (emphasis added).

[39] Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 274.

St. Peter is his orthodox confession of faith, pure and simple. That is certainly a more probable than that which suggests that St. Maximus never inextricably linked the promise of Christ to St. Peter and the orthodox confession of the Roman church. Are there other possibilities? There are, but the Eastern Orthodox defender against papal apologetics is certainly entitled to keep his finger on this situation so as to curtail the clarity with which many Catholics try to surmount from the Maximian witness.

Thankfully, the occasion of St. Maximus's letter to his disciple Anastasius provides a key to understanding what may have been going on in his own head, since when it was transcribed and sent abroad for many to read it, which had been St. Maximus's intention, the transcriber added a note at the very end which sheds light on the situation. In that portion of the letter before the transcriber's note, the author, St. Maximus, tells Anastasius that he was told that the pope ordered both his acceptance of the doctrinal resolution reached at Constantinople and to be received into its communion, to which Maximus says he responded with the following: "*May what has been determined by God before every age receive its end, bringing to him glory which has been known before every age.*"[40] Even in the face of a threat that Rome supported his communication with Constantinople, he would rather die than give up the confession of faith. Now, Anastasius received this letter and had it copied in order to be sent to Christians abroad so to notify the faithful of the message of St. Maximus in exile, now sentenced to death. The intent was to gather prayers to almighty God for help considering the dreadful circumstances. In addition to copying the letter, it appears that Anastasius had another person conduct the transcription who also added a final note or "*coda*" (concluding remark) at the very end. The transcriber's coda states:

> Anastasius[41] ordered me to transcribe these things and to make them known to you most holy people, in order that, when you have found out about the trial from these, you might all bring a common prayer to the Lord on behalf of our common mother, that is the catholic church. . . . For there is great fear in the whole world because this [church] endures persecution by everyone at the same time, *unless he offers aid by his customary grace, he who always comes to aid, leaving the seed of piety at least in older Rome, confirming*

[40] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions*, 123.

[41] Anastasius probably had someone writing for him. Some scholars see it as Anastasius himself; see Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions*, 38.

> *the promise he made to the prince of the Apostles, which does not deceive us.*[42]

What breathtaking words! Before moving into interpreting this, a question of authorship must come up. Who was the transcriber? Whoever it was, it would have been someone in the close circle of entrusted associates with Anastasius and perhaps his master, St. Maximus himself. Some have given manuscript evidence to suppose it was a certain Theodore Spoudaeus, who was a friend of Anastasius.[43] Some scholars have argued it was Anastasius the disciple of St. Maximus himself, under the order of the former.[44] Whoever it was, it must have been a person closely linked to Anastasius, St. Maximus's long-standing disciple. Further, it might be asked whether the *coda* itself was dictated by Anastasius and simply copied by the transcriber. That seems more than likely, and if that is the case, the *coda* itself is Anastasian in authorship anyway. This is significant since Anastasius had been following faithfully under the spiritual direction of St. Maximus for thirty-seven years[45] and would live on to write the famous biography of his master, *Life of Maximus*. Needless to say, Anastasius is venerated by the Orthodox Church to this day (Jan 21). Therefore, his testimony would be merely an echo of his master's belief.

On that note, it is pertinent to observe the last line of the *coda*, which includes a specific consideration of God's giving of "customary grace," which is defined as the divine aid which always provides the "seed of piety" in "older Rome," which in turn maintains the validity of God's promise to St. Peter. On its face, we are back to the inextricable link between the orthodox confession of Rome and the promise of infallibility to St. Peter, echoing the Formula of St. Hormisdas (519). Some interpreters, however, might look at this promise as applying generally to the whole Church, such that the promise would be kept whether Rome or anyone else kept the true faith. However, St. Maximus's disciple probably thought in concert with his master, who directly applied the promise of indefectibility from Matthew 16 specifically to the unique and particular Roman church. By way of repetition, St. Maximus wrote: "All the churches of Christians everywhere have held the greatest Church

[42] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions*, 123 (emphasis added). This coda doesn't exist in Greek copies. However, if the letter is sent to Westerners, it would explain the absence of the Greek in collections preserved.

[43] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions*, 2.

[44] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions*, 38.

[45] Neil and Allen, eds., *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions*, 71.

there [i.e., in Rome] to be their sole base and foundation, since, on the one hand, *it is in no way overcome by the gates of Hades according to the very promise of the Savior*, but holds the keys of the orthodox confession and faith in Him."[46]

Rome's continued orthodoxy supposedly confirms this promise, and since Christ is God, the promise cannot "deceive us." If the object of the promise of Christ to St. Peter was merely a floating confession of faith to be held by anyone, then the promise is confirmed by anyone who confesses the right faith. And yet, the author of the *coda*, transcribing the thought of Anastasius, fixed the object of promise in the particularity of "older Rome."[47] Obviously, something more was being communicated.

It seems reasonable therefore to suggest that St. Maximus himself felt the need to speak to the hypothetical of an erring Rome while inwardly hoping that the report was false. The same can be said of Anastasius's *coda* here. Nevertheless, the foregoing attempt to show how St. Maximus can be instanced as an early testifier of papal infallibility is not without its flaws and an emphasis on one part of the data in either way can cause one to question whether he truly was a testifier or was not.

Now, for some concluding remarks. Based on the evidence given, it is reasonably clear that both St. Maximus, at least before the end of his trial in exile, and Anastasius, through his transcriber, understood the divine promise of Jesus Christ to St. Peter to uniquely apply to the orthodox confession of the Roman See. While the promise entails that the Roman church will confess the correct faith, confessing the correct faith is always a rule under which even Rome can be tested. The correct faith is always what validates Rome, a council, a decree, and so on. And this is so because what is correct is validated by almighty God who cannot lie. God and the truth are always the higher rule of faith than the human confessor.[48]

This is certainly what St. Paul meant when he said that the Holy Spirit would even anathematize him and his fellow missionaries if they were to preach another Gospel (Gal 1:5–6). But that does not mean that he thought the Apostles could not speak infallibly (Heb 2:3–4). While

[46] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 202 (emphasis added).

[47] If the promise was already confirmed by the existence of one single Christian with the orthodox faith, then there would be no need for looking elsewhere for this confirmation. St. Maximus and Anastasius were both holding to the orthodox faith. They clearly saw the object of the promise in the Apostolic See, or hoped to so see.

[48] Hierotheos Vlachos, *The Mind of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Esther Williams (Greece: The Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1998), 215.

St. Maximus surely made statements before his trial which entail that Rome's doctrinal confession will always, by divine promise, align with the right confession of faith, he was, during his trial, forced to offer the most absolute and "narrowest" definition of what constitutes the true Church of Christ, which is the orthodox confession of faith.[49] The contemporary Orthodox who objects to the reference to St. Maximus for the defense of papacy, therefore, can leverage some support from this whole story. Nevertheless, it appears his disciple Anastasius[50] also understood that even when the external and institutional Church comes under a crisis of faith, even so high as to reach the Roman church, it is still to that Church that the promise of indefectibility pertains as a way to restore health to the universal Body of Christ, serving as the *external criterion.* Adam Cooper explained this extremely well:

> Regarding the *external criteria* of the church's catholicity, Maximus clearly accepts the headship of Peter among the Apostles, the preeminence of the church of Rome on account of its Petrine office, *and communion with its Bishop as an essential factor for the realization of catholicity.* He also accepts a temporal hierarchy in which Christ is mediated through the apostles and prophets and teachers (the church's bishop's), and a local hierarchy of bishops, priests, deacons, monks, and other lay orders, and initiates. There is no doubt that apart from its reference to the one Word and Spirit of God, such external specificity can only lend itself to diffusion and dissolution. So Maximus can invoke the apostle Paul "through whom the Holy Spirit condemns even angels who institute anything contrary to the kerygma." But through the harmony created by right faith active in love, it is the means by which each individual component in the whole structure is able to participate in its unique, unchanging centre.[51]

[49] Cooper, "St. Maximus the Confessor on Priesthood, Hierarchy, and Rome," 364.

[50] At the very least, his transcriber who was closely linked to the circle of Anastasius.

[51] Cooper, "St. Maximus the Confessor on Priesthood, Hierarchy, and Rome," 367 (emphasis added).

*Chapter Twenty*

# The Council of Constantinople (681) and the Tome of Pope St. Agatho

WITH THE ASCENSION of Emperor Constantine IV (668–685), Rome consulted, once again, for the terms and conditions of healing the schism between East and West, which had lasted thirty years.[1] The response fell to Pope St. Agatho (678–681). He convened a synod in Rome, after which he sent legates to Constantinople with "a dogmatic letter [Tome] on the Two Wills,"[2] (Dyotheletism). The content was basically no different than that codified at the Lateran Synod (649). The pope informed the council that he had sent legates not to merely discuss what the true faith is but also to declare that Rome's interpretation of the Christological matter was certain and that the council's job was simply to take the unquestionable truth and put it into imperial and conciliar format. Indeed, as Siecienski notes, "There could be no doctrinal debate since the matter

[1] Judith Herrin, "The Quinisext Council," in *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*, eds. Richard Price and Mary Whitby (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 157.

[2] C. W. Previté-Orton, *The Later Roman Empire to the Twelfth Century*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 212.

had already been decided at the Lateran Synod."[3] The letter of the pope stated the mission of his legates:

> We have directed persons from our humility to your valour protected of God, which shall offer to you the report of us all, that is, of all the Bishops in the Northern or Western Regions, in which too we have summed up the confession of our Apostolic Faith, *yet not as those who wished to contend about these things as being uncertain, but, being certain and unchangeable to see them forth in a brief definition*, suppliantly beseeching you that, by the favour of your sacred majesty, *you would command these same things to be preached to all, and to have force with all.*[4]

Some portions of this letter from St. Agatho are certainly worth mentioning, as it became the controlling document of the whole council. Beginning with a basic statement of Trinitarian faith, St. Agatho appealed to the decree "which was set forth in a council over which Pope Martin presided,"[5] and confessed this synod (Lateran, 649) as the criteria of orthodox belief on the operations and wills of Christ. Concerning the role of the Apostolic See of Peter, St. Agatho wrote:

> And therefore I beseech you with a contrite heart and rivers of tears, with prostrated mind, deign to stretch forth your most clement right hand to the Apostolic doctrine which the co-worker of your pious labours, the blessed apostle Peter, *has delivered*, that it be not hidden under a bushel, but that it be preached in the whole earth more shrilly than a bugle: because the true confession thereof for which Peter was pronounced blessed by the Lord of all things, was revealed by the Father of heaven, for he received from the Redeemer of all himself, by three commendations, the duty of feeding the spiritual sheep of the Church; under

[3] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 205.

[4] Third Council of Constantinople, Letter of the Roman Synod (681), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3813.htm.

[5] Third Council of Constantinople, The Letter of Agatho and of the Roman Synod of 125 Bishops, *New Advent*.

> whose protecting shield, this Apostolic Church[6] of his *has never turned away from the path of truth in any direction of error, whose authority, as that of the Prince of all the Apostles, the whole Catholic Church, and the Ecumenical Synods have faithfully embraced,*[7] and followed *in all things; and all the venerable Fathers have embraced its Apostolic doctrine,* through which they as the most approved luminaries of the Church of Christ have shone; *and the holy orthodox doctors have venerated and followed it,* while the heretics have pursued it with false criminations and with derogatory hatred.[8]

Here is an unmistakable claim to the historical orthodoxy of the Roman church and inscribed into the *Acts* of an ecumenical council still recognized by the Eastern Orthodox today. The "authority" of the Apostolic See is said to have been followed by the universal Church as a matter of historical fact. The equivalent to what St. Agatho says here is that all the hitherto ecumenical councils to 681 had submitted to the authority of St. Peter embodied in his successor. This is certainly the Roman view of ecclesiastical primacy. Implicitly, therefore, the pope was saying the right-believing Greek East had adopted the Roman view of the papal primacy, an assertion that is rarely admitted by modern scholars. It is interesting to see the sort of reading that this pope had of the Church's history before him. In modern debates over the papacy, so many opponents are fast to reach into the early centuries for the instances where the popes were resisted, rejected, and even accused of heresy, all in attempt to show that Rome was just another equal church with a primacy of honor. St. Agatho has a very different reading of the Church's past, and it is his recounting that makes it into the *Acts* of an ecumenical

---

[6] A reference to the apostolic church of Rome, rather than the universal Church.

[7] Notice here that St. Agatho says that even the ecumenical synods, which the Orthodox think is the highest authority in the Church, are said to have "followed" the authority of the Apostolic See. If the council were following the authority of the Apostolic See, it must have been because the Apostolic See possessed a higher authority. Now a critical scholar might point out how the Council of Constantinople (553) did not find itself submissive to Pope Vigilius, and the Council of Constantinople (381) did not even require the consent of Pope St. Damasus. Nevertheless, St. Agatho's letter proclaims that the synods of the ecumenical Church all followed the authority of the Roman See as a summation of its authority over councils no less, and the Greek bishops responded to this letter by saying it was St. Peter who wrote the letter through St. Agatho. These are worthy observations even if their weight is not conclusive.

[8] Third Council of Constantinople, Letter of Agatho to Constantine IV, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

council. St. Agatho continued to explicitly echo the Formula of Hormisdas in saying that the See of Peter had received and kept the "rule of faith" (*regula fidei*) without spot, all due to the promise of Christ to St. Peter:

> For this is the rule of the true faith, which this *spiritual mother* of your most tranquil empire, *the Apostolic Church of Christ*, has both in prosperity and in adversity always held and defended with energy; which, it will be proved, by the grace of Almighty God, *has never erred from the path of the apostolic tradition*, nor has she been depraved by yielding to heretical innovations, but from the beginning she has received the Christian faith *from her founders,*[9] *the princes of the Apostles of Christ, and remains undefiled unto the end, according to the divine promise of the Lord and Saviour himself,* which he uttered in the holy Gospels to the prince of his disciples: saying, "Peter, Peter, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, *that (your) faith fail not.* And when you are converted, *strengthen your brethren.*" Let your tranquil Clemency therefore consider, since it is the Lord and Saviour of all, whose faith it is, *that promised that Peter's faith should not fail and exhorted him to strengthen his brethren*, how it is known to all that the Apostolic pontiffs, *the predecessors of my littleness*, have always confidently done this very thing.[10]

Here is a clear statement of Rome's indefectibility which, as St. Maximus held, is based upon the promise of Christ to St. Peter.[11] This letter says nothing different than what the Formula of Hormisdas said.

[9] Confirming that he has the Roman church in mind and not the universal Church. The universal Church of Christ was founded by Christ upon the foundation of all the Apostles and Prophets, himself the chief cornerstone (see Eph 2).

[10] Third Council of Constantinople, Letter of St. Agatho to Constantine IV, *New Advent.*

[11] Some argue that St. Agatho only intended to refer to the universal Church at large without any reference to Rome in particular. However, by his referencing the "Apostolic Pontiffs" of Rome as the vehicle of transmitting the faith, this interpretation is very unlikely. Besides, when he referred to the "founders" as Sts. Peter and Paul (i.e., Princes), he excluded the universal Church which is founded by the Lord and the Apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). Everyone knew that when it comes to a joint-founding of a church by Sts. Peter and Paul, we are talking about the Roman church. See Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 202.

Even the Protestant historian Philip Schaff, who cannot be accused of a bias toward Roman Catholicism, understands the plain sense of St. Agatho's letter. He recounts:

> It is also remarkable for the confidence with which it claims *infallibility for the Roman church*, in spite of the monotheletic heresy of Pope Honorius (who is prudently ignored). Agatho quotes the words of Christ to Peter, Luke 22:31, 32, in favor of papal infallibility, *anticipating*, as it were, the *Vatican decision of 1870*.[12]

What is more interesting is how the Eastern Fathers of the council received this letter after it was read aloud in their hearing. In their *Prosphoneticus* to the emperor, they wrote:

> But the highest *prince of the Apostles* fought with us: for we had on our side his imitator and the *successor in his see*, who also had set forth in his letter the mystery of the divine word (θεολοίγιας). For the ancient city of Rome handed thee a *confession of divine character*, and a chart from the sunsetting raised up the day of dogmas, and made the darkness manifest, and *Peter spoke through Agatho*, and thou, O autocratic King, according to the divine decree, with the Omnipotent Sharer of thy throne, didst judge.[13]

Even if we were to see through the Byzantine flattery, no one could mistake the basic point: their explicit acceptance of the letter. The council then wrote in their response letter to the pope:

---

[12] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *Medieval Christianity: From Gregory I to Gregory VII AD 590–1073* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 500 (emphasis added).

[13] Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *The Third Council of Constantinople: The Prosphoneticus to the Emperor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 348 (emphasis added). If the letter of St. Agatho is, as the council says, the very voice of the Apostle Peter, then its contents were agreeable in their totality. However, included in the letter of St. Agatho were claims to a divine protection to the teaching service of the successors of St. Peter on behalf of the universal Church, and this protection was also said to be underneath the solid assurance of God's very own promise in Jesus Christ. By the Eastern bishops saying that St. Peter assisted them and spoke through his successor ("*per Agathonem Petrus loquebatur*"), St. Agatho, they testify to the basic action of the papal claims; see Paul McPartlan, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, The Eucharist, & Church Unity* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 24.

> Serious illnesses call for greater helps, as you know, most blessed [father]; and therefore Christ our true God, who is the creator and governing power of all things, gave a wise physician, namely your God-honoured sanctity, to drive away by force the contagion of heretical pestilence by the remedies of orthodoxy, and to give the strength of health to the members of the church. *Therefore to thee, as to the bishop of the first see of the Universal Church, we leave what must be done*, since you willingly take for your standing ground the firm rock of the faith, as we know from having read your true confession in the letter sent by your fatherly beatitude to the most pious emperor: and we acknowledge that *this letter was divinely written (perscriptas) as by the Chief of the Apostles*, and *through it* we have.cast out the heretical sect of many clement scepter.[14]

As part of the council's own decree:

> This holy and Ecumenical Council has *received* and with *uplifted hands* has greeted the letter of the most holy and blessed pope of elder Rome, Agatho to the emperor.[15]

In the letter of Emperor Constantine IV to Rome (to Pope St. Leo II, successor to St. Agatho), we have some startling statements:

> The letter of Pope Agatho, who is with the saints . . . we ordered it to be read in the hearing of all, and we beheld in it as in a mirror the image of sound and unsullied faith. *We compared it with the voices of the Gospels and of the Apostles, and set beside it the decisions and definitions of the holy ecumenical Synods*, and *compared the quotations it contained with the precepts of the Fathers*, and *finding nothing out of harmony, we perceived in it the word of the true confession* [i.e., of Peter] *unaltered.* And with the eyes of our understanding *we saw it as it were the very ruler of the Apostolic*

[14] P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 14, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, trans. Henry Percival (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 349 (emphasis added).

[15] Mansi 11.632, The Decree of the Council, in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, trans. S. Herbert Scott (Mysterium Co., 2015), 282.

> *choir, Peter himself,* declaring the mystery of the whole dispensation. . . . Glory be to God, who does wondrous things, *who has kept safe the faith among you unharmed. . . . For how should He not do so in that rock on which He founded His Church, and prophesied that the gates of hell, all the ambushes of heretics, should not prevail against it?* From it, as from the vault of heaven, the word of the true confession flashed forth, and enlightened the souls of the lovers of Christ.[16]

Pope St. Agatho's letter, although principally a Christological exposition, is one of clearest testimonies of papal indefectibility and was explicitly held up by the Sixth Ecumenical Council as the decree which brought victory to the orthodox faith.[17] As such, it cannot be ignored or

[16] Mansi 11.713–18, Letter to Leo II, in *The Condemnation of Pope Honorius*, by Dom John Chapman (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1907), 105–07 (emphasis added).

[17] One might point to the fact that when the patriarch of Constantinople voiced his reaction to the letters from Rome, he said the following: "I have diligently examined the whole force of the suggestions sent to your most pious Fortitude, as well by Agatho, the most holy Pope of Old Rome, as by his synod, and I have scrutinized the works of the holy and approved Fathers, which are laid up in my venerable patriarchate, and I have found that all the testimonies of the holy and accepted Fathers, which are contained in those suggestions, agree with, and in no particular differ from the holy and accepted Fathers. Therefore I give my submission to them and thus I profess and believe." The Latin can be found from Mansi 11.335; see also Third Council of Constantinople, "Session VIII," *New Advent*. Thus, it would appear that the patriarch of Constantinople did not accept the papal letters until he judged them orthodox for himself, and therefore this is a purported proof against papal infallibility. The idea here is that if the papal letters were seen as infallible, no one could speak of accepting them only after verifying their orthodoxy. However, this is a very unbalanced expectation. The very purpose of the presence of the patriarchs and bishops of the ecumenical church was for each representative to exercise his own office in judging whether the statements of faith presented at the council were in accord with the Apostolic Tradition. If each representative bishop at the council merely presented himself to add his subscription to the papal letters, his participation would have been entirely passive. It would have been a ceremony merely to count votes. But ecumenical councils are venues wherein each bishop has to give his own input on the matter for his profession to count as an episcopal witness in the *Acts* of the council. Now, if George of Constantinople would have entered a contest with Rome, then it would have devolved into a matter of authority, pure and simple. Secondly, a Catholic might point out that the papal letters include a clear testimony to the promise of Jesus Christ on the infallibility of the Roman See, i.e., that Peter's unfailing faith is synonymous with the authoritative decrees of the popes. The very beginning of the synodal letter states that the pope was not willing that his letters were open for debate since the matter had already been decided by the authority of Rome (see Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 205). Therefore, even if Patriarch George said he agreed with this only after examining the document (*a posteriori*), he is still subscribing to the *a priori* infallibility of Rome as well as to Rome's judgment

immaterialized by Orthodox opponents of the papacy. The bishops at the council formally endorsed the papal letter wherein the pope says that, of the previous ecumenical councils, they all followed the "authority" of the Apostolic See in all things, and that the divine word of promise by Christ to St. Peter is proven by the perpetual guardianship of the apostolic faith by the Roman pontiffs. Even Emperor Constantine IV's letter to Pope St. Leo II describes the ministry as if it were the rock upon which Christ built the Church and implies, if taken literally, that the pope is infallible.

At face value, this seems to confirm Roman Catholic perspectives. However, as Francis Dvornik wrote, these statements should not be too exaggerated since this council moved on and "*condemned Pope Honorius.*"[18] St. Agatho may have been confident in proclaiming that all his predecessors were infallible, but the council simply did not take that as an absolute prevention from accusing Pope Honorius of heresy. Therefore, while Pope St. Agatho's letter makes a bold claim to Roman infallibility, and while this was inserted into the official *Acts* of an ecumenical council, this gain came with the massive toll, as Jalland notes, of Rome's consent to declaring one of her occupants to be a heretic.[19] This would become the first time that a bishop of Rome officially admitted that one of his predecessors stained the unblemished purity of the Apostolic See, and it certainly puts the letter of St. Agatho to the council back under scrutiny.

---

that the contents of the papal letters were not open for debate. As can be seen, the whole council judged that the power of God through St. Peter worked through Pope St. Agatho to utter infallible truth. If the bishops at the council were superior judges which determined the orthodoxy of Rome, then why would they come to the conclusion that God inspired the letters of Rome by the supreme power of St. Peter if their own convocation were superior to judge the matter? On the contrary, the council came to the conviction, albeit *a posteriori*, that the sacred rights of St. Peter grounded the orthodoxy of St. Agatho, and that accords with St. Agatho's own claim to *a priori* infallibility rooted in the promise of Jesus Christ to St. Peter when he was still standing in the flesh before the Apostles. You cannot get more prior than this. Lastly, the doctrine of papal infallibility does not include the idea that the pope is *absolutely* infallible. Only God is *absolutely* infallible, and the pope shares in God's infallibility on certain conditions. Therefore, as even St. Paul could claim that the content of truth was of a higher order than the apostolic witness (see Gal 1:6–8), that does not mean that the Apostolic College was open to complete apostasy through heresy. Therefore, in participating in a council adjourned to judge on the faith, mere assent of the papal letters would not be an adequate testimony. The bishops must use their reason and intellect to match the content of the pope's letters to the apostolic deposit of faith. This manner of profession is the most honest and comprehensive.

[18] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 92.

[19] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 367.

What makes this situation even more difficult is the criteria that St. Agatho gave as the fulfillment of Christ's promises to Peter's faith, namely, that *all* of his predecessors had faithfully taught the orthodox faith and that the Roman church had never failed to be orthodox *since the beginning*. As Jaroslav Pelikan said, "absolutes as 'never' and 'always' meant, of course, that *evidence of even one* historically documented instance of deviation from orthodoxy would be sufficient to refute the claim."[20] If Pope Honorius was a heretic, then the very criterion proving St. Agatho's claim of Roman infallibility is, *prima facie*, refuted. Nevertheless, the council *Acts* show no sign that the bishops contested Agatho's claim that his predecessors were infallible. That portion of the pope's letter remained in the official text, alongside the anathema against Honorius. Therefore, either there is a factual contradiction in the council or there is a way to justify the substance of what Agatho claimed and the finding of Honorius as a heretic. Whether or not Popes Liberius, Vigilius, or Honorius were truly "heretics" in the later medieval sense of being a formal heretic can be a matter of debate, but what should not be a matter of debate is that Pope St. Agatho's successor, St. Leo II, confirmed the council's condemnation of Pope Honorius. And the council expressly condemned Honorius "because of what we found *written by him to Sergius*, that *in all respects he followed* his [Sergius] view and confirmed his impious doctrines."[21] It was the letter of Pope Honorius that caused the council to indict him for heresy, not an identified lack of resolve, and thus they understood him to have been committed to an unorthodox confession of faith. It is true that Honorius's successor John IV, as well as St. Maximus the Confessor, defended the letter to Sergius from heresy, and their argumentation is very compelling. However, whether Honorius was truly and actually a Monothelite heretic is a different question than what the council believed to be the case. After receiving the *Acts* of the council from Constantinople in 682, Pope Leo II wrote:

> Because, as we have said, it [the Council] has perfectly preached the definition of the true faith which the Apostolic See of blessed Peter the apostle (whose office we unworthily hold) also reverently receives, therefore we, and by our ministry this reverend Apostolic See, wholly and

[20] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 148 (emphasis added).

[21] Third Council of Constantinople, "Session XIII," *New Advent* (emphasis added).

> with full agreement do consent to the definitions made by it, and *by the authority of blessed Peter* do confirm them, even as we have received firmness from the Lord Himself upon the firm rock which is Christ.[22] . . . And in like manner, we anathematize the inventors of the new error, that is . . . [list of names] . . . and also Honorius, *who did not attempt to sanctify this Apostolic Church with the teaching of apostolic tradition, but by profane treachery permitted its purity to be polluted.*[23]

It could not be clearer that Honorius was accused by his successor of polluting the purity of the Apostolic See by teaching unorthodox doctrine. The material used in this condemnation was the content of his letters to Sergius and not any purely negligent act of not attending to his papal duties. Of course, the latter was included, but more is in view. And so, we have St. Leo II admitting that at least one of his predecessors was a heretic. And yet, if one thought it could not get more confusing, this same pope claimed that the See of Rome "until his own day preached the true doctrine" and that, with respect to the orthodox faith, his predecessors had, "with great labor transmitted intact to Leo himself."[24]

How could such statements be made by the same pope who confirmed the condemnation of Pope Honorius? One will also notice that, even being fully aware of the accusation of heresy against his predecessor, that Leo II still exercised the unique Petrine ministry and said that it receives strength from the Lord. Obviously, he did not think a heretical occupant of the papal office obliterated the unique ministry that stands upon divine foundation. Perhaps he assumed what would later be codified on the conditions of papal infallibility. More on that in the next chapter.

The scholarship varies on the question of Honorius. According to Francis Dvornik, "In Rome, no one attributed to Honorius the paternity

---

[22] Even with the knowledge of a heretical predecessor in the Chair of Peter, Leo II still thought the divinely instituted Petrine ministry was active and operative in his own judgment. He added that the See of Peter receives infallible strength. One wonders if he even felt the need to explain these realities while also admitting to the existence of a heretical pope. Perhaps he assumed what was later held by the medievals when they sought to codify the conditions of papal infallibility.

[23] *Leo II to Emperor Constantine IV*, PL 96, 406, in *Condemnation of Pope Honorius*, by Chapman, 113–14 (emphasis added).

[24] Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 145.

of the condemned heresy. They merely censured his lack of vigilance."[25] Elsewhere, Dvornik writes: "Agatho's successor, Leo II, when confirming the decisions of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, was well aware of this and, in his letter to the emperor, blamed Honorius only for neglect of his duty to prevent the spread of heretical teaching."[26] Even the Anglican Trevor Jalland is of the opinion that Honorius was condemned not for Monothelitism but for a failure "to examine the matter with sufficient thoroughness."[27] Surely, the case seems debatable, then.

But what is of deeper concern here is what the wider Church in council, including the pope, understood to be possible in the event of a papal failure. Catholic historian Dr. William Carroll perhaps goes too far when he thinks that Pope St. Leo II sort of modified the council's condemnation of Honorius to emphasize the latter's negligence in sifting the heresy away rather than himself being guilty of error. Relying on the letter of Pope St. Leo II to Spanish bishops, Carroll believes, along with Fr. Dvornik, that Honorius "was condemned for not at once extinguishing the flames of heresy, but rather fanning them *by his negligence*."[28] Also, according to St. Leo II's letter to King Erwig in the West, claims Carroll, Honorius was condemned "for using an expression which the heretics were able to employ to advance their cause, thereby *allowing the Faith to be stained*."[29] This may very well be how St. Leo II understood the situation, if not right away.

Given that the overwhelming transparency of Honorius's actual letters to Sergius do not exemplify the substantial error of the Monothelites, the evidence might favor that Honorius himself did not commit any doctrinal errors. But the weightier fact is that the council did not recognize this. They read his letters and saw him "in all respects" agreeing with Sergius. Interestingly enough, this issue of Honorius would come up again. When Pope St. Nicholas I made claims to doctrinal supremacy, the Byzantines were able to point to the figure of Honorius as an example of Roman fallibility.[30] It was Pope Hadrian II (867–872) who addressed this concern of a pope who commits a doctrinal error. In a Roman synod

[25] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 92.

[26] Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 35.

[27] Jalland, *Church and Papacy*, 363.

[28] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 254 (emphasis added).

[29] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 254.

[30] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 168.

in 869, which was also read aloud at the Council of Constantinople (869), Hadrian writes:

> We have read that the Roman Pontiff judges all pastors of all the Churches, but we do not read that he is judged by anyone. For if the Oriental Bishops pronounced an anathema against Honorius, after his death, we must remember that he had been accused of heresy, and that is the *sole reason for which inferiors may lawfully judge their superiors* by freely rejecting their pernicious opinions. . . . And still no Patriarch, no Bishop, could ever have pronounced against him if the Pontiff, ruling in this same Primatial See, had not previously given them the authority.[31]

The first part simply carries on from the late fifth-century Ennodian principle, *Prima Sede a nemine iudicatur* (The First See is judged by none). For the second time in the historical record, we have a pope describing an exception to that rule, that exception being a deviation from the faith. Hadrian II, like Leo II, did not think this point abrogated the essence of the papacy. However, he added a very peculiar detail. While inferiors can judge their superiors when the latter deviate from the faith, when it comes to the popes, no sentence can be pronounced against him until the Apostolic See somehow sanctions it. Without that, no one is competent to judge the pope of Rome. It just so happens that Pope St. Leo II was the official that sanctioned the posthumous sentence against Honorius. That is an unmistakable claim to the superior authority of the papacy over councils by a pope who was aware of the fact that there are conditions on which popes can commit doctrinal error.

To repeat an earlier assertion, even centuries later during the era of Gratian's *Decretum*, Pope Innocent III's time (1198–1216), and the historical apex of medieval canonistic tradition, it was the "unanimous opinion of the canonists" that the "Pope was the supreme authority within the Church, and a heretical 'Pope' was liable to judgment simply because,

[31] The citation can be found in the *Acts* of the Council of Constantinople IV (869) in Mansi 16.126. This English translation is taken from the Irish Ecclesiastical Record, which gives as its reference "Harduin. Concil. vii., Less. vii." The full reference is Jean Hardouin, ed., *Acta Conciliorum et Epistolae Decretales ac Constitutiones Summorum Pontificum, Tomus Quintus* (Parisiis: Ex Typographia, 1714), 1079; Eng. trans. in "The Resurrection of Gallicanism," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, vol. VI (London: Burns & Oates, 1870), 207; see also Leonardi, ed., *Acts of Constantinople IV*, 238; reference supplied to me by Fr. Richard Price.

*by reason of his heresy*, he had ceased automatically to be Pope."[31] Did the Greek bishops at the council have this understanding of the compatibility of an erring and heretical pope alongside the doctrine of papal infallibility? It is very difficult to say with certainty. By their approval of the pope's Tome and their letters back to the Apostolic See and to the emperor, as well as the latter's to the pope, it would seem their words point in the direction of some recognition of divine assistance in the pope and one rooted in the Petrine architecture of Christ's Church.

Could they have just read all of these statements as legendary praise and typical Byzantine prose or flattery? Those options rise to the surface with some measure of credibility, especially in light of the puzzle over how to deal with Honorius. Enormous doubt overshadows this, however, in light of the fact that St. Agatho utilized the promise given by Jesus to St. Peter as recorded in the most holy Gospel of St. Luke as the foundation of papal infallibility. It would be difficult to concede that such a gross exaggeration would involve a mistreatment of a divine promise even if the attempt was to superficially enhance a common legend that holds an honorific status among story-tellers. On the contrary, the interpretation which sees St. Agatho being honest and sincere with his application of Holy Scripture is far more compelling and respectful of his person than the alternative.

[31] Brian Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 9 (emphasis added).

*Chapter Twenty-One*

# The Development of Papal Failure and *Ex Cathedra* Conditioning

THE TWO STORIES of Pope Vigilius and Pope Honorius makes for an especially important growth in doctrinal development with regard to the papacy. How are we to understand the tradition which says the First See is judged by no one in light of these events? As with nearly any organ of government known among men, there are exceptions to the primary rules. The exception, in fact, is what proves the rule. Exceptions to this principle of papal immunity existed throughout the centuries going forward from the time of St. Symmachus.[1] On the sad and unfortunate circumstance of papal heresy and how the Church came to interpret this in light of papal supremacy, Fr. Klaus Schatz writes:

> Heresy was a special case; a pope who became a heretic was no longer a legitimate pope; he no longer needed to be judged by human beings, because "those who do not believe are condemned already" (John 3:18). The heresy of a pope was acknowledged at Rome at least from the ninth

[1] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 73–75.

> century onward as an exception to the principle *prima sedes a nemine iudicatur.*[2]

Even in the *Decretum Gratiani* (Gratian's Decree), which formed a significant guide to the canon law tradition in the Latin West, it was clearly stated that if a pope strayed from the faith, *he could be judged.*[3] Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), "in whose pontificate the papacy had attained the summit of its power, temporal as well as spiritual, took it to be a necessary principle of faith that that 'only on account of a sin committed against the faith can I be *judged by the church.*'"[4] Another quote from the same pope does far more justice:

> Nevertheless he [the pope] should not mistakenly flatter himself about his power, nor rashly glory in his eminence or honor, for the less he is judged by man, the more is he judged by God. I say "less" because he can be judged by men, or rather shown to be judged, if he clearly *loses his savor to heresy*, since he "who does not believe, is *already judged.*" It is *only in this case* that it should be understood of him that, "*If the salt loses its savor, it is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and to be trodden on by men.*"[5]

What makes the above claim by Innocent III even more interesting is that he stated elsewhere, in the year 1199 to the patriarch of Constantinople after citing the famous Lukan citation of Christ's prayer on behalf of St. Peter's faith: "The Lord reveals that he had prayed for him, saying in the crisis of his passion: I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once concerted, confirm they brethren; . . . by this signifying clearly, that his successors would at no time deviate from the faith, but rather would call back others."[6] Here, not only did Innocent think that Christ promised infallibility to St. Peter and his

---

[2] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 74.

[3] J. Michael Miller, C.S.B, *The Shepherd and the Rock: Origins, Development, and Mission of the Papacy* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1995), 292.

[4] Innocent III, Sermon div. 2 (*PL* 217:656), as quoted in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 4, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, by Jaroslav Pelikan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 108 (emphasis added).

[5] Pope Innocent III, *Between God and Man: Six Sermons on the Priestly Office*, trans. Corinne J. Vause and Frank C. Gardiner (Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 48–49.

[6] Pope Innocent III, *Acta Innocentii PP. III, 1198–1216*, ed. Theodosius Halusynskyj (Vatican

successor, but presumably to all of his successors with no exception for heresy. And yet, prior to this, he held there was such a possibility. Perhaps he himself knew of the distinction between a full-fledged papal decree versus the private beliefs of a particular Roman Pontiff? In any case, Innocent seemed to support, in one place, the possibility of a Roman Pontiff forfeiting his office.[7]

According to Catholic archbishop of Vancouver, Michael J. Miller, "most canonists believed that the pope lost his office because of heresy. *This remains the common teaching today.*"[8] The late medievalist Brian Tierney, who was a world renowned medievalist scholar, states that according to "the unanimous opinion of the canonists the pope was the supreme authority within the Church, and a heretical 'pope' was liable to judgment simply because, by reason of his heresy, *he had ceased automatically to be Pope.*"[9] Even going back into the patristic era, the bishops at the Second Council of Constantinople (553) made a motion to remove Pope Vigilius from the diptychs, meaning, to excommunicate him, on the basis that "he *made himself* alien to the Catholic Church by defending the impiety of the aforesaid [Three] chapters."[10] Of course, who can forget the famous cases of Liberius and Honorius as proof that the patristic Church understood the capacity for error in the pope? Although he himself believed that God would never allow a pope to ever be a heretic,[11] a succinct summary of this issue was stated by the famous Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617):

---

City: Typis Polyglottis, 1944) 189; Eng. trans: D. L. D'Avray, "A Letter of Innocent III and the Idea of Infallibility," *The Catholic Historical Review* 66. 3 (July 1980), 417.

[7] He could have also been posing a hypothetical scenario that was actually impossible in his mind. But that is unlikely.

[8] Miller, *Shepherd and the Rock*, 292; Miller refers to Pelikan's *Reformation of Church and Dogma*, 108 (emphasis added).

[9] Brian Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 9 (emphasis added).

[10] Richard Price, trans., *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters*, 3 vols., *TTH* 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), vol. 2, 101 (emphasis added). The "Three Chapters" were a compilation of documents by three theologians which was condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Vigilius had vacillated over them. This might be an exception since it was based on an imperial command to the council, its validity thereby being somewhat questionable.

[11] Suárez says elsewhere: "Even though many affirm this as more probable, nevertheless to me (in brief) it seems more pius and more probable that a Pope could indeed err as a private person out of ignorance but not out of contumacy. For although God is able to prevent a heretical Pope from harming the Church, nevertheless it is more agreeable to the way of divine providence that—since God has promised that the Pope would never err in his

> If the pope becomes an unrepentant heretic, after having passed on him the declaratory sentence of this crime by legitimate ecclesiastical jurisdiction, *he ceases to be pope.* This is the *common doctrine of the doctors.* . . . The reason for this is that it is a very grave harm for the Church to have such a shepherd and that *she cannot undergo such grave danger.* Furthermore, *it is against the dignity of the Church to remain subject to a heretical pope without being able to remove him.*[12]

St. Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), who also held strongly that God would not, in his providence, allow a pope to be a formal heretic,[13] and who was no small defender of the sacred rights of the successor of St. Peter, described the five opinions that were held by theologians concerning the following: "A pope can be judged and deposed by the Church in the case of heresy, as is clear from Dist. 40, can. Si Papa:[14] therefore, the Pontiff is subject to human judgment, *at least in some case.*"[15] St. Bellarmine surveys four opinions,[16] and then comes to the fifth, which he takes as his own (obviously as hypothetical):[17]

---

definitions—He would insure that there would never be such a heretical Pope. And since up till now there has never been one in the Church, it should consequently be thought that, by the ordination and providence of God, there cannot be one" (Francisco Suárez, *De fide theologica,* disp. 10, sect. 6, no. 10, vol. 12, *Opera Omnia,* ed. Vivès [Paris, 1858], 319 [Quod licet multi verisimiliter affirment, mihi tamen breviter et magis pium et probabilius videtur, posse quidem Papam, ut privatam personam, errare ex ignorantia, non tamen ex contumacia. Quamvis enim efficere Deus possit ut haereticus Papa non noceat Ecclesiae, suavior tamen modus divinae providentiae est, ut, quia Deus promisit Papam definientem numquam erraturum, consequentur provideat ne umquam ille haereticus sit. Adde, quod hactenus in Ecclesia numquam accidit, censendum ex Dei ordinatione et providentia accidere non posse]). Translation and citation provided to me through private correspondence with Dr. Robert Fastiggi.

[12] Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church,* trans. Salvator Attanasio (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons,1964) 261–62 (emphasis added).

[13] Bellarmine states clearly in *De Summo Pontifice* 4.5 that it is both probable and a pious belief "that not only as 'Pope' can the supreme Pontiff not err, but he cannot be a heretic even as a particular person." He goes on to argue that "to this point no [Pontiff] has been a heretic, or certainly it cannot be proven that any of them were heretics; therefore it is a sign that such a thing cannot be" (Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Tomus II,* vol. 2, *On the Roman Pontiff,* 171). Credit goes to Dr. Robert Fastiggi for pointing me to these texts.

[14] This is a reference to the canon in Gratian's Decree which says a pope can't be judged by anyone unless he is found deviating from the faith.

[15] Bellarmine, *De Controversiis,* vol. 1, *On the Roman Pontiff,* 322 (emphasis added).

[16] Bellarmine, *De Controversiis,* vol. 1, *On the Roman Pontiff,* 322–26.

[17] Bellarmine, *De Controversiis,* vol. 1, *On the Roman Pontiff,* 327.

> Now the fifth true opinion, is that a pope who is a manifest heretic, ceases in himself to be pope and head, just as he ceases in himself to be a Christian and member of the body of the Church: whereby, *he can be judged and punished by the Church. This is the opinion of all the ancient Fathers, who teach that manifest heretics soon lose all jurisdiction.*[18]

As late as 2016, Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, former prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura (2008–2014) and highly esteemed canon lawyer, stated the following in an interview conducted by *Catholic World Report*: "If a Pope would formally profess heresy *he would cease, by that act, to be the Pope.* It's automatic. And so, that could happen."[19] Another contemporary and renowned canon lawyer, Dr. Edward Peters, sums up his own research on the question of what would occur if a pope became a formal heretic, taking from sources stretching as far back as to the prominent Franz Xavier Wernz (1842–1914) to the contemporary Fr. Lawrence Wrenn, with the following:

> In sum, and while additional important points could be offered on this matter, in the view of modern canonists from Wernz to Wrenn, however remote is the possibility of a pope actually falling into heresy and however difficult it might be to determine whether a pope has so fallen, such a catastrophe, *Deus vetet, would result in the loss of papal office.*[20]

Vast numbers of books on this subject have been written through the centuries, but the fact that the medieval canonists many years after the Greek and Latin separation (eleventh century forward) were largely agreed that a pope could be a heretic or that if he were, he would lose his place in the Chair of Peter, shows that the doctrine of the papacy was held compatible with the event of a pope who erred in the faith. This is an extremely important point to note because there have been Orthodox

[18] Bellarmine, *De Controversiis*, vol. 1, *On the Roman Pontiff*, 327. (emphasis added).

[19] "Cardinal Burke: 'No, I am Not Saying that Pope Francis Is in Heresy,'" *The Catholic World Report*, December 19, 2016, https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2016/12/19/cardinal-burke-no-i-am-not-saying-that-pope-francis-is-in-heresy/ (emphasis added).

[20] Edward Peters, "A Canonical Primer on Popes and Heresy," *In the Light of the Law: A Canon Lawyer's Blog*, December 16, 2016, https://canonlawblog.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/a-canonical-primer-on-popes-and-heresy/ (emphasis added).

critiques of the modern papacy along the lines of the evidence during the first millennium of popes being accused of doctrinal error. They often point to Popes Vigilius or Honorius as testimonies that are supposed to demonstrate that the Church of their time could not have possibly held to the papacy. But are we prepared to say that St. Robert Bellarmine and Cardinal Raymond Burke disbelieve in the doctrine of the papacy?[21]

As described above, as early as Pope St. Leo II (682), we have, on the one hand, a recognition of the divine status of the papacy while also acknowledging his predecessor was a heretic. According to prominent Church historian Karl F. Morrison, St. Leo II held that the "Roman Church until his own day preached the true doctrine, which descended from apostolic tradition to the Fathers and the doctors of the Church and which the 'apostolic successors' of St. Peter had with great labor transmitted intact to Leo himself."[22] He somehow distinguished between the teaching office of the pope and the fallibility of the person in office.

Also, it should be borne in mind that at the First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus* seems to develop in the direction of the private opinions of Bellarmine and Suárez, which has it that the Roman Pontiff could never even be a formal heretic. The text of the council says that the "this See of St. Peter always remains untainted by any error, according to the divine promise of our Lord and Savior made to the prince of the disciples."[23] Theologians continue to debate this, but that statement sounds just as general and plenary as the claim of Pope St. Agatho in his conciliar letter that says the Petrine gift of infallibility covered all his predecessors up to his point.

This latter interpretation seems preferable in theory, for it shouldn't take the reader long before questioning just how helpful it is to have an infallible guide in the Church in St. Peter's throne which can, under certain circumstances, fail in maintaining the apostolic faith and perhaps

[21] St. Robert Bellarmine himself thought it was not possible for a pope to be a heretic, and therefore, he would also not think a papal deposition would ever happen. However, he did repeatedly speak to what would happen, theoretically, if a pope were to ever commit heresy.

[22] Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 145; the epistle of Leo II being referenced is in n30: Epistle 6, *PL* 96.416. Morrison thinks that Leo is making a distinction between "the see and the particular bishop" (145). In this case, the See of Peter is without blemish, but there might be a particular occupant who fails at his duties by erring in the faith. This seems inconsistent because Leo II is claiming his "predecessors" delivered the tradition intact, and so this is a reference to persons and not strictly to the papal office. Perhaps Leo II means to say the supreme function of the papal office, but that is by no means clear.

[23] *Pastor Aeternus*, §4 (Denz-H, 3070–3071).

mislead the lambs of Christ. In the first millennium, many popes made unmistakable claims of infallibility, but they do not specify any precise conditions such as *Pastor Aeternus* does with the *ex cathedra* mode of papal teaching. Is the *ex cathedra* conditioning a pure novelty hatched by the invention of man? Much of the evidence adduced in the first millennium on the divine protection from error of the Apostolic See seems to be a general and total protection, allowing no room for exceptions to that rule. And yet, since the beginning of the second millennium up to the current day, the Catholic Church only dogmatically teaches that the pope is *only protected on certain conditions*, namely, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when he makes use of his universal office of shepherd and teacher in defining a binding dogma on faith and morals.

It can almost appear as though this development of precise conditioning is an *a posterior* attempt to explain how papal failures can exist while also trying to maintain some semblance of papal infallibility on certain fixed conditions, sort of like shooting an arrow into the wall and then drawing the target around the puncture point as its bullseye.[24] If the *ex cathedra* conditioning of papal teaching were doing this, then it should be rejected altogether because it would be proven to be a man-made construction. But when certain facts are considered, the course of development that was taken in the Latin West begins to make more sense. When looking back upon the Church's exercise of its highest doctrinal office, we see the necessity of a certain Petrine protocol which involved having the bishops of Rome, by virtue of their inheriting the authority of St. Peter's office, authoritatively ratifying the decrees of a council before they obtain universally binding force.

As St. Leo the Great and St. Gelasius taught, the Apostolic See is the highest court and the final judge on doctrine. That tradition is expressed in unmistakable clarity. As a "final judge," it is possible to conceive of the allowability of papal failures when a pope is not intending to make a judgment final and definitive. Certainly, a pope is not infallible at a dinner table discussion over theology even if he uses strong language. A recognition that not everything the pope says is infallible might be implied by the fact that the church of Rome did not collect every last

[24] In his *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), Fr. John Meyendorff gives a reasonable criticism: "They [Catholic apologists] also point out—quite anachronistically—that the letter to Sergius was not a formal statement, issued by the Pope ex Cathedra, using his 'charisma of infallibility,' as if such a concept existed in the seventh century" (353).

statement or letter of the pope but saved collections that were considered more along the line of decrees that get archived with canon law.[25]

One of the best examples of the Church's belief in the supremacy of papal doctrine is the Second Council of Lyons (1274). Under the pontificate of Pope Gregory X, the following profession of faith concerning the primacy of Rome, given for subscription by the Greek emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus, marks a major point of definition in the historical development of papal infallibility:

> Also this same holy Roman Church holds the highest and complete primacy and spiritual power over the universal Catholic Church which she truly and humbly recognizes herself to have received with *fullness of power from the Lord Himself in Blessed Peter . . . so if any questions shall arise regarding faith they ought to be defined by her judgment.* And to her anyone burdened with affairs pertaining to the ecclesiastical world can appeal; and in all cases looking forward to an ecclesiastical examination, recourse can be had to her judgment, and all churches are subject to her.[26]

From the standpoint of official action, this acceptance on the part of the emperor was, according to the late Byzantologist Charles Diehl, effectively placing "the Byzantine Church once more under Roman authority."[27] As Yves Congar notes, "If the Pope has the power 'to decide matters of faith authoritatively, so that they may be held by all with unshaken faith,' *then clearly the dogma of Vatican I necessarily follows.*"[28] This decree bears within it the very concept of papal infallibility six

[25] An example of this comes from Pope St. Hilary who in a Roman synod (465) stated that "only at the peril of his status can anyone violate either the divine constitutions or the decrees of the apostolic see" (see citation from *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study*, by Trevor Jalland [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944], 314). By shelving the "divine constitutions" with "decrees of the apostolic see," it would seem that the latter were reserved as worthy of collecting. Thus, there may be here an implicit recognition that not everything a pope says is worthy of record, that being saved to his "decrees" of some sort. Of course, many of these documents are disciplinary decrees, but the concept of authoritative mode versus private opinion seems to be illustrated in the discriminate collection of papal writings.

[26] H. Denzinger and K. Rahner, eds., *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. R. J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 185 (emphasis added).

[27] Charles Diehl, *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline*, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 223.

[28] Congar, "Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Infallibility of the Papal Magisterium," *Thomist* 28

hundred years prior to the convocation of the First Vatican Council. But it still remains a question of what conditions are for a judgment from the pope in order for the judgement to be considered one that has finality, irreformability, and therefore infallibility. Just a generation after the Council of Lyons, a Carmelite philosopher and canon lawyer, Bishop Guido Terreni (1270–1342), had formulated the following conclusion in a *Questio* from his own study of papal authority:

> [T]he supreme pontiff and the Roman church, guided by the Holy Spirit, teaches and determines the truth in things pertaining to the faith *without error.* Nor would the Holy Spirit, who teaches all truth permit the supreme pontiff or the church to err.[29]

In consideration of the objection that popes had erred in the past (which is pertinent to the Honorius question), Terreni states:

> [A]lthough in himself he can err as a single person, nevertheless the Holy Spirit does not permit him to *define* anything contrary to the faith of the church *for the sake of the community of the faithful and the universal church.*[30]

Terreni further argued that while the pope might become even a heretic as a private person, he cannot define as *binding on the whole Church* a doctrine which is heretical.[31] As such, "Guido's position was closer to the nineteenth century doctrine of papal infallibility than any that had been developed earlier."[32] This is true, indeed, since the documents of antiquity up until the finish of the first millennium all seem to imply a general and total infallibility of Rome.

According to medieval historian Dr. Brian Tierney, it had been known by students of canon law that there was a distinction to be drawn from

---

(1974), 103, citation from *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church,* by Francis A. Sullivan, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 90 (emphasis added).

[29] B. M. Xiberta, *Guidonis Terreni questio de magisterio infallibili Romani pontificis* (Münster in Westf.: Aschendorff, 1926), 15–16, in *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages,* by Brian Tierney (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1972), 247 (emphasis added).

[30] Xiberta, Xiberta, *Guidonis Terreni questio de magisterio infallibili Romani pontificis,* 28; Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350,* 249 (emphasis added).

[31] Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350,* 249.

[32] *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350,* 249.

the pope's private teaching versus his public official pronouncement, but that with Bishop Guido Terreni, we begin to see infallibility attributed to the latter, and fallibility to the former.[33] That is not to say that Terreni is the first to assert the gift of infallibility to the teaching ministry of the Roman Pontiff, but rather this distinction between *fallible private capacity* versus *infallible public and official capacity* appears to be a particularly Terrenian development, as least from the vantage point of the documentary evidence.

A good example of a general claim to papal infallibility is seen in the famous *Dictatus Papae*, the twenty-second line of which says: "The Roman Church has never erred and, as Scripture shows, can never err."[34] Centuries after this, it became prominent for Catholic theologians to argue along the lines of St. Francis de Sales (d. 1622):

> Under the ancient Law, the High Priest did not wear the Rational except when he was vested with the pontifical robe and was entering before the Lord. Thus we do not say that the Pope cannot err in his private opinions, as did John XXII; or be altogether a heretic, *as perhaps Honorius was*. . . . But when he is clothed with the pontifical garments, *I mean when he teaches the whole Church as Shepherd*, in general matters of faith and morals, then there is nothing but doctrine and truth. And in fact everything a king says is not a law or an edict, but that only which a king says *as king* and *as a legislator*. So everything the Pope says is not canon law or of legal obligation; he must mean to define and to lay down the law for the sheep, and he must keep the due order and form. . . . Theologians have said, in a word, that he can err in questions of fact, not in questions of right; *that he can err* extra cathedram, *outside the chair of Peter, that is, as a private individual by writings and bad example*. But he cannot err when he is *in cathedra*, that is, when he intends to make an instruction and decree for the guidance of the whole Church, when he means to confirm his brethren as supreme pastor, and to conduct them into the pastures of the faith. For then it is not so much man who determines, resolves, and defines as it is the blessed Holy Spirit by man,

[33] *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350*, 250.

[34] *Dictatus Papae*, PL 148.407–08; Eng. trans: J. M. R. Tillard, OP, *The Bishop of Rome*, trans. John de Satgé (London: SPCK, 1983), 54.

> which Spirit, according to the promise made by Our Lord to the Apostles, teaches all truth to the church.[35]

Taking from this, Catholic theologians saw it as immensely reasonable to infer that even in the patristic era, the gift of infallibility would be applied only when Rome actually exercised her fullness of teaching power, and not applied when not doing so. After all, even the Apostle Peter denied that Jesus was both Lord and Christ in his thrice-denial of him. Certainly, the Apostle Peter erred in his private capacity in that act but was infallible, at least, in his two divinely inspired epistles included in the canon of the New Testament. Thus, a *fallible capacity* versus an *infallible capacity* within one single personal subject is not so far-fetched. For a supremely authoritative arbitration does not occur in the pope's private capacity, but only in his official and dogmatic capacity in teaching the whole Church. This may serve to be described as an essential patristic seed for the later Vatican dogma, and it can be a legitimate model for a Catholic to appeal to in order to explain the failing and erring popes of the past.

Fr. Robert Eno summarizes what he found to be patristic "strands" which had later become "significant threads in the fiber of medieval thinking" concerning the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff:

> Rome's position as leader in the West (for it was the church to which questions and problems were brought for answers and solutions) coupled with the Roman idea that *its decision was final*: the fact that the things it approved gained a special solidity from the rock of Peter; the fact that Roman appropriation was *necessary* for the acceptance of any formulation, *even that of an ecumenical council*; the fact that, in comparison to the major Eastern sees, Rome's record of supporting orthodoxy (or what eventually turned out to be orthodox positions) was exceptionally good, though not perfect; finally, related to this last, the evolving tradition that there was some special quality of doctrinal purity in the faith of the Roman community; and all of this was *under the seal of Petrine leadership reaching back to the commission of Christ himself.*[36]

[35] Francis De Sales, *The Catholic Controversy* (Charlotte: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1986), 305–07 (emphasis added).

[36] Robert Eno, "Some Elements in the Pre-History of Papal Infallibility," in *Teaching Authority*

And so, the *ex cathedra* condition appears to be a logically supported development from the idea of the Apostolic See as the final judge, but it is a development nonetheless. It would be very difficult to say that the Byzantines at the Sixth Ecumenical Council employed this *ex cathedra* conditioning to explain the existence of the heretical Pope Honorius. While they accepted St. Agatho's letter, which included a claim of Christ's promise to protect the Apostolic See from error while at the same time accusing Pope Honorius of heresy, there is not an explicit explanation for how these two unseemly facts are conjoined in the minds of the bishops at the council.

Fr. John Chapman, therefore, slightly exceeds the evidence provided by the Sixth Ecumenical Council when he states that "no council has by acts and word more fully recognized the authority and infallibility of Rome than the sixth council which condemned—rightly condemned—Pope Honorius."[37] He can only say this by assuming that the churchmen at the time were conscious of a strict distinction within papal teaching, namely, between *ex cathedra* and *ordinary fallible* decrees that we saw articulated in the fourteenth century Carmelite Guido Terreni. Although it seems to be assumed by Pope St. Leo II, it is only by the time of Hadrian II (869) that we have an explicit record of how it was resolved that the Petrine supremacy stands firm even if an occupant of Peter's Chair fails in doctrine. That would lead to further developments in the second millennium as discussed above.

Needless to say, a fair reading of the pertinent letter of Pope Honorius to Sergius of Constantinople is reasonably orthodox if one understands "one will" in Christ as meaning there was no division between "law of sin" and the "law of the mind" as spoken of by St. Paul in Romans 7.[38] That seems to be what Honorius intended, and it was how his successor, John IV, as well as St. Maximus, understood him. This opens the question of whether the council that simply lumped Honorius in with the Monothelites was an infallible action? Could it not be that factual errors could occur in a council? Also, the pope is clearly not making a

*and Infallibility in the Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, ed. Paul C. Empie, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 257 (emphasis added).

[37] Fr. John Chapman, O.S.B., *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 67.

[38] The reader should see the two letters of Honorius, which are translated into English in *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents*, by Pauline Allen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 195–209.

universally binding dogmatic definition but rather has the tone of refrain rather than positive teaching.

## *Chapter Twenty-Two*

# The Quinisext Council (691–692), Imperial Supremacy, and the Papacy

Succeeding Constantine IV to the throne of the Byzantine Empire was Justinian II, who sought to perfect the two previous ecumenical councils with another synod to compile the Church's disciplinary canons. This synod (692) was opened *as ecumenical* and is called the Quinisext Council (fifth/sixth) in order to show that it was a completion synod of the two prior (otherwise called the Council of Trullo). Mimicking the first Justinian's project that grew to be the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, Justinian II desired the canonical body affirmed at this new ecumenical council to be binding on the whole Church,[1] something which was not achieved at the council held just prior in Constantinople (681). What makes this council significant is that it was held without the pope presiding through his legates, and it attempted to pass canons which were overtly contradictory to Roman practice. One prominent example was the Roman practice of fasting on Saturdays. Canon 55 of the Quinisext Council unmistakably forbade this, citing the authority of the Holy Fathers (Apostolic Canon

[1] L. D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 285.

64),[2] and threatened deposition or excommunication, even in the Roman church, of anyone who fasted on Saturdays.[3]

While Pope Sergius I (650–701) did not attend, nor did he send legates to represent the Apostolic See, there was in attendance a certain Basil of Gortyna, from the Metropolitanate of Crete (technically under Rome).[4] However, when the proceedings came back to Rome, the pope rejected certain canons and refused to give his confirmation of the council. Justinian II, following the example of his predecessor Justinian I, knew that "his initiative alone was insufficient to invest its [the council's] decisions with the force of law throughout the imperial *oikoumene*," and that "for this to occur, the *conciliar acts had to be approved by the bishop of Rome without whose confirmation the unity of the faith and the assurance of its freedom from doctrinal error could not be guaranteed*."[5] Since Pope Sergius was determined not to accept the canons,[6] Justinian II used imperial force to try to arrest the pope in hopes that this threat of danger would compel the pope to ratify the council. Western militia came to the aid of the pope, and the emperor was unsuccessful.[7] According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Sergius saw that "certain chapters contrary to ecclesiastical observance" had been included at the council, and so he remained unmoved in his rejection of them.[8]

One of Sergius's successors, Pope John VII, also felt pressure to ratify the council. Justinian II had asked John VII to "confirm such of them as he approved while rejecting the ones he found unacceptable,"[9] but John

---

[2] Richard Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 135.

[3] Council of Trullo (A.D. 692), "Canon 55," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3814.htm.

[4] He may have acted in some capacity of representation of Rome. Ekonomou says papal *apokrisiarius* were present (see Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* [Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007], 220), but I've not found any source giving precise detail to the nature of this representation.

[5] Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 221 (emphasis added).

[6] We have no record of the pope's particular concerns, but it is likely that the pope resisted due to canons that were at odds with Roman disciplinary praxis; see Judith Herrin, "The Quinisext Council," in *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*, eds. Richard Price and Mary Whitby (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 160–163.

[7] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 139.

[8] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 35.

[9] J. N. D. Kelly, "John VII," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University

VII oddly sent the canons back without amending them at all, giving no formal ratification.[10] No successful headway occurred until Pope Constantine (708–715) managed to visit Constantinople, where pope and emperor came to some sort of an agreement through the Roman deacon Gregory, who "convincingly explained the Roman objections to a number of the canons."[11] As a result, there seems to have been a verbal agreement over which canons were "not repugnant to western usage,"[12] the details of which we have no record. According to Fr. Richard Price, "All commentators presume that the solution was, as it had to be, a compromise,"[13] one in which, most likely, certain disciplines would pertain to the Byzantine East, while they would not be enforced in the Latin West.[14]

Under Pope Hadrian I (772–795), we have a letter made out to then patriarch of Constantinople, St. Tarasios (787) which states, "I receive the sixth sacred council with *all its canons which have been promulgated according to divine law (jure ac divinitus)*."[15] It is probable that this means there was some restriction upon what canons were acceptable,[16] leaving the pope to have earned "a dispensation from the application of the canons in question."[17] More probable is that the arrangement under Pope Constantine called for such a qualification.

The Quinisext canons also play into the first canon of the Council of Nicaea II (787), which the Greeks understood to be a reaffirmation of the ecumenicity of the Quinisext canons.[18] However, the Roman

---

Press Inc., 1986), 84.

[10] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 42.

[11] J. N. D. Kelly, "Constantine," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 85.

[12] J. N. D. Kelly, "Constantine," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 85; Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West: The Church, AD 681–1071* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 38; Consult also with Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 154.

[13] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 44.

[14] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 44.

[15] Hadrian, Epistle to Tarasios, quoted in "The Council in Trullo Revisited: Ecumenism and the Canon of the Councils," trans. George Nedugatt, in *Theological Studies* 71 (September 2010), 670 (emphasis added). Fr. Price translates the Latin such that it isn't Hadrian's own words but Hadrian describing the words of St. Tarasios (see *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 51–52). However, Western canonists invariably took Hadrian to be speaking about his own acceptance of these canons.

[16] George Nedugatt, "The Council in Trullo Revisited," 671.

[17] Heinz Ohme, "Sources of the Greek Canon Law to the Quinisext Councils (691/2): Councils and Church Fathers," in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, eds. Wilfried Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 83.

[18] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 610.1.

qualification shows up once again in Anastasius Bibliothecarius, chief papal librarian and Roman archivist, in his 873 translation of the *Acts* of Nicaea (787). There he writes[19] that the Roman church received the Quinisext canons "with the provisio that it in no way receives those of these which contradict earlier canons or the decrees of the holy pontiffs of his see or sound precepts."[20]

Interestingly enough, Fr. Richard Price sees the Roman hesitation and the pope's eventual qualification on the Quinisext canons as tantamount to Rome never really approving the council.[21] At the very least, a *modus vivendi* was achieved, which is practically an admission that the canons of the 691/2 council, especially those that threatened excommunication for noncompliance, carried no force for the universal Church. The Byzantine East would come to find a way to work with this.

Photius, the famous patriarch of Constantinople, is known for his insistence in a letter to Pope St. Nicholas that the practices of the West which contradicted the practices of the East, such as Saturday fasting and priestly celibacy, should not be a cause for ecclesiastical division.[22] At the Council of Constantinople (879–880), one of its canons explicitly states that the liturgical and disciplinary customs of the Roman church are tolerable and appropriate.[23] Considerate voices even after Photius, such as Peter (eleventh century), patriarch of Antioch, and Theophylact (eleventh century), archbishop of Ochrid, were emphatic that only serious doctrinal differences should be a cause for division.[24]

---

[19] Fr. Clarence Gallagher, S.J., a renowned Church scholar in both Eastern and Western canon law, states that Anastasius the Librarian was quoting John VIII when he wrote this. Fr. Gallagher provides the following translation: "Therefore the principal See accepts in this synod [i.e., Nicaea II, AD 787] the regulations that the Greeks claim were produced by the sixth synod, but in such a way that on no account are those accepted which are found to be opposed to earlier canons or decrees of the holy pontiffs of this See or which are certainly contrary to sound morals" (*Church Law and Church Order in Rome and Byzantium: A Comparative Study* [New York: Routledge, 2018], 43n14 [emphasis added]); see also Charles Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*, vol. 5, *A.D. 626 to the Close of the Second Council of Nicaea, A.D. 787* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), 240–42.

[20] Price cites Anastasius from *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, Series secunda, III.1.1, 31–2,5 (see Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 51); Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 224.

[21] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 54.

[22] John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 24.

[23] Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, 52.

[24] Meyendorff, *Living Tradition*, 25.

According to Fr. John Meyendorff, the neutralizing of the Quinisext canons has been recognized universally by the contemporary Orthodox Church, especially since the Council of Constantinople (1895), presided over by the Patriarch Anthimos, made it clear that liturgical differences should not cease in the case of reunion. Likewise, the Quinisext Council proved no problem for Latin canonists "Ivo of Chartres, Pope Innocent III, and Gratian";[25] however, the latter cites the authority of Pope Hadrian I, which may have restricted validity only to a few canons. This qualification likely became the Roman view from the ninth century going forward. Historically, the Quinisext Council shows how, by the seventh century, there were already clear signs of the sort of differences that were in the minds of churchmen in the Greek East versus the Latin West. While the emperor clearly shows that he was cognizant that the formal acceptance of a council by the Apostolic See was tremendously important, the sort of canons that were drawn would not have been as liberal as they were, particularly against the Roman practice, if the Greek East at this time unanimously held to the divinely instituted status of the Roman church.

[25] Nedugatt, "The Council in Trullo Revisited," 672.

*Chapter Twenty-Three*

# Iconoclasm, Nicaea II (787), and the Papacy

In the first half of the eighth century, Constantinople's policy on images and their veneration by the new Byzantine Emperor Leo III would lead the East into one of the greatest challenges to the orthodox faith in the first millennium. In 726, following the bad caesaropapist habit of his predecessors, Leo III seized for himself the prerogative to publish an imperial edict wherein he condemned the Church's practice of venerating images, including a supporting theological condemnation of it.[1] Images of Christ and the saints were destroyed, and many who venerated them suffered for their firm conviction of their holy usage.[2] This ushered in the iconoclastic controversy which, in two phases, lasted from 726 to 843.

The patriarch of Constantinople, St. Germanus, was deposed by the authority of the emperor because of his refusal to condemn holy images, and was subsequently replaced by an iconoclastic man, Anastasius.[3] Under the use of force, the Constantinopolitan patriarchate had adopted

[1] Hugo Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, trans. Leo Donald Davis, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 240.

[2] Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, 240.

[3] Edward J. Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930, republished by Mimesis International, 2014), 33–34.

this iconoclastic policy and consequently found itself outside of communion with Rome and the other Eastern patriarchs as well. When Leo III informed Rome about the need to abide by the new iconoclastic edict, Pope St. Gregory III (731–741) convened a synod of bishops (731), which issued an authoritative decree "in which all persons who broke, defiled, or took images of Christ, of His Mother, the Apostles or other saints *were declared excommunicate*."[4]

The successor to Leo III, Constantine V (740–775), went further and convened what he authorized as an "ecumenical council" in Hieria (754) whose declarations formally condemned the veneration of icons on behalf of the whole Church. This council had 338 Eastern bishops which anathematized all who supported the veneration of images, including St. John of Damascus.[5] Pope Stephen III responded in 769 by *annulling and condemning its decrees*.[6] In addition, other Eastern patriarchs ruled in favor of the veneration of images. It would not be until the throne of the empire welcomed Constantine V's successor, Leo IV (775–780), whose mother Empress Irene stood in as his regent, that the Constantinopolitan policy would be meaningfully reversed. To gain the support of the pope of Rome, a royal letter was sent calling for the pope to visit Constantinople in order to participate in an ecumenical council or to send representatives with legatine authority. This letter, otherwise called the *Sacra of Constantine and Eirene to Pope Hadrian*, includes the following plea:

> Therefore, *O most holy Head* (*Caput*), it is incumbent upon us and you, that irreprehensibly we know the things which be his, and that in these we exercise ourselves, since from him we have received the imperatorial dignity, and *you the dignity of the chief priesthood*. . . . As then you are the veritable chief priest (*primus sacerdos*) *who presides in the place and in the see of the holy and superlaudable Apostle Peter*, let your paternal blessedness come to us.[7]

---

[4] Adrian Fortescue, s.v. "iconoclasm," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07620a.htm (emphasis added).

[5] Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 37.

[6] J. N. D. Kelly, "Stephen III (IV)," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 93.

[7] "The Divine Sacra Sent by the Emperors Constantine and Irene to the Most Holy and Most Blessed Hadrian, Pope of Old Rome," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 14, *The Seven*

The Byzantine theocracy saw emperor and pope as the only adequate balm to heal the wound. In one of the most startling exemplifications of papal prerogatives, Pope Hadrian (785) wrote two letters back, one directed to the Constantine VI[8] and Irene, and another letter to the Patriarch St. Tarasios of Constantinople (784–806). These two letters are extremely significant. In sum, the pope defended the orthodox practice of venerating icons while "demanding also the recognition of Rome's primacy."[9] The "primacy of Peter and the authority of the keys form the main theme of the letter," says the late Cambridge Professor Edward J. Martin, and thus "the necessity of submitting to the judgment of the Church of St. Peter."[10] Aside from protecting the holy use of images, the pope's major concern was the return of territories to Rome's patriarchal jurisdiction,[11] but these letters give some of the clearest evidence as to how Rome understood the divine institution of the papal office by Christ the Lord in the Apostle Peter. Hadrian writes:

> If you persevere in that orthodox Faith in which you have begun, and the sacred and venerable images be by your means erected again in those parts, as by the lord, the Emperor Constantine of pious memory, and the blessed Helen, who promulgated the orthodox Faith, and exalted the *holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church your spiritual mother*, and with the other orthodox Emperors venerated it as the *head of all Churches*. . . . But the more, if following the traditions . . . you embrace the *judgment of the Church of blessed Peter, chief of the Apostles* . . . so you, too, venerating

*Ecumenical Councils*, eds. P. Schaff and H. Wace, trans. Henry Percival (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 529 (emphasis added).

[8] Constantine VI happened to be too young to reign himself, and so Irene was reigning as regent for the time being.

[9] Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 267. For a detailed summary of the papal claims of Pope Hadrian, see Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 191–92. For Hadrian, writes Morrison, "the doctrine of papal monarchy was the starting point. . . . Hadrian concluded that all the Church knew that the See of St. Peter had the right to reverse the judgments of anyone, that it had the privilege of judging every church, that no one might judge of its judgment, and that, if anyone presumed to dispute the rule of the Apostolic See, he was anathema" (Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church*, 191–192 [emphasis added]).

[10] Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy*, 90.

[11] Aiden Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, second edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 217.

> it with honour, love with all your heart *his Vicar*, and if your sacred majesty follow by preference their orthodox Faith, *according to our holy Roman Church.*[12]

He continues:

> May the chief of the Apostles himself, to whom the *power was given by our Lord God to bind and remit sins in heaven and earth*, be often your protector, and trample all barbarous nations under your feet, and everywhere make you conquerors. For let sacred authority lay open the marks of his dignity, and how great veneration ought to be shown to his, *the highest See*, by *all the faithful* in the world. *For the Lord set him who bears the keys of the kingdom of heaven as chief over all*, and by Him is he honoured with this privilege, by which the keys of the kingdom of heaven are *entrusted to him*. He, therefore, that was preferred with so exalted an honour was thought worthy to confess that Faith on which the Church of Christ is founded. A blessed reward followed that blessed confession, by the preaching of which the holy universal Church was illumined, and from it the other Churches of God have derived the proofs of Faith. *For the blessed Peter himself, the chief of the Apostles, who first sat in the Apostolic See, left the chiefship of his Apostolate, and pastoral care, to his successors, who are to sit in his most holy seat forever. And that power of authority, which he received from the Lord God our Saviour, he too bestowed and delivered by divine command to the Pontiffs, his successors.*[13]

This text of Pope Hadrian introduced nothing new that had not been already claimed by his predecessors going back to at least Stephen in the mid-third century, but this text certainly has a unique clarity and emphasis. In particular, the question of where the Roman primacy originates was unmistakably answered. Any idea of the Roman church being,

[12] Part of Pope Hadrian's Letter, in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 14, eds. Schaff and Wace, 536.

[13] Second Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787), "Session 2," in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3819.htm (emphasis added).

at the starting line, equal with all other churches, only to later receive certain canonically conditioned privileges by the authority of bishops, was wholly excluded from the mind of Hadrian. There have been former statements attributing a certain Petrine inheritance by the Sees of Alexandria (through St. Mark, disciple of St. Peter) and Antioch (being St. Peter's first post), but the explanation here of the Roman inheritance of the Petrine prerogatives is far more definitive, singular, and unique.[14] Hadrian did not understand the Petrine inheritance of the Roman bishop to be by way of analogical reflection of St. Peter's original position. Rather, he understood that the original position given by Christ to Peter actually descends to a particular lineal succession, that of the Roman bishopric. They match the words of the papal legate at the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus (431), Philip the presbyter. One can say that Hadrian understood a real, direct, concrete, and legal inheritance of St. Peter's originally instituted office passed down through a unique process of being his successor, which is permanently stationed in the bishopric of the Roman church. The specificity is all there and harkens back to Pope St. Siricius and St. Leo's conception of being the "heir" of St. Peter taken from Roman law and jurisprudence. The heir stands in the place of the deceased and inherits everything belonging to the latter.

Further in the same letter, we read:

> [M]ay the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be fulfilled that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it," and again, "You are Peter, and on this rock I shall build my Church." . . . His see, which exercises primacy throughout the world, was set up as the *head of all the churches of God*, and has always held and retains the primacy *which the blessed Peter the Apostle exercises through an injunction of the Lord's and with the church no less assenting*, to the effect that no see in the whole church ought to have a greater executive role than the first, which confirms each synod by its authority and protects it by its continuing guidance.[15]

[14] There are also claims within the patristic corpora, rare as they are, that the position of abbots, patriarchs, archbishops, metropolitans, and even all ordinary bishops bear the "figure" of Peter, by way of analogy. That is to say that an analogy or comparative parallel is drawn between St. Peter's position vis-à-vis the Apostles and that of all primates in all the hierarchical levels of Church government. However, Hadrian's letters exemplify something altogether different and historically determined.

[15] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University

This phenomenon is wholly exclusive to Rome. Certainly, Constantinople couldn't pretend to make this claim for itself, to which Hadrian then turned his attention in the very same letter. One of the demands made by Pope Hadrian in the letter was for the patriarch of Constantinople to cease using the title "ecumenical patriarchate," since, in his mind, it pretends a universal headship over the whole Church, even that of Rome the true head. He writes in the same letter:

> Because if he be named Universal, above the holy Roman Church which has a prior rank, which is the *head of all the Churches of God*, it is certain that he shows himself as a rebel against the holy Councils, and a heretic. For, if he is Universal, he is recognized to have the Primacy even over the Church of our See, which appears ridiculous to all faithful Christians: *because in the whole world the chief rank and power was given to the blessed Apostle Peter by the Redeemer of the world himself; and through the same Apostle, whose place we unworthily hold, the holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church holds the first rank, and the authority of power, now and for ever,* so that if any one, which we believe not, has called him, or assents to his being called Universal, let him know that he is estranged from the orthodox Faith, and a rebel against our holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.[16]

These were explicit claims to a universal office of primacy founded by divine institution in St. Peter by the Lord Christ himself, and made in an almost exclusively Greek council, still venerated as *ecumenical* by the contemporary Orthodox Church. Even though the primary concern of the council was to deal with the question of images, Hadrian's concern was for the emperor and the East to "accept the unique authority of the Roman see; for the true faith (he insists) is that of St. Peter, and is preserved in the teaching of his successors the popes, to whom St. Peter bequeathed the fullness of his authority."[17] Now, to be fair, scholars have traditionally pointed out that the Greek version of Pope Hadrian's letter

Press, 2020), 171 (emphasis added). Price notes that the last part of this citation is an echo of a statement made by Pope St. Gelasius (492–96) nearly three centuries earlier; see 171n123.

[16] Schaff and Wace, eds., Part of Pope Hadrian's Letter, in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 14, 537 (emphasis added).

[17] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 143; Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West: The Church, AD 681–1071* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 61.

had been drastically altered in a number of places *in order to downplay the papal claims.*[18] This is because, as Fr. Richard Price notes,[19] the original Latin texts of the Seventh Council that we have on record include very clear attestations of papal jurisdiction based on Christ's divine institution while all the present day Greek manuscripts appear to omit a great deal of these attestations (though certainly not all of them).

Apparently, the Greeks at Nicaea (787) read the Latin original of Hadrian off the record, outright rejected the claims of Petrine supremacy (among other things), and then proceeded to modify the text of the pope's letter before reading it aloud and inscribing it into the official *Acts*; by doing so, the Greeks, presumably with the agreement of the papal legates, supposedly cleansed the official text of the council of unacceptable papal claims. This modified version of the Hadrianic letters is preserved in the Greek copies and reflects what was actually stated at the council. This is what many scholars believe can be considered the "traditional" view. However, significant historians contend that these alterations did not actually happen at the council, and that the bishops read a direct translation of the original Latin presented by the papal legates with all the papal attestations *without any alteration*, corresponding to the English translation provided above by Fr. Richard Price.[20] Price follows the scholarship of Erich Lamberz[21] and the late classics professor, Dr. Luitpold Wallach (1910–986), who argued quite persuasively *that the entirety of the original Latin text was read aloud at the council*, and that

[18] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 183. If anyone reads the available excerpts from the Second Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787) at *New Advent*, the Greek version is said to have been the only version read aloud, and it has a drastic watering down of the papal claims. Also, this view is taken for granted by J. M. Hussey in *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 46. The first and foremost reason this theory can't sustain itself is that even in the current Greek copies we have, which had significant alterations from Hadrian's original first letter, the papal claims do not remove the basic idea of papal primacy according to divine institution. There is the admission that Rome is the "spiritual mother" of the universal Church, that the Roman church is the chief church above all other churches because of her founding by the chief apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, to whom were given a unique power of leadership in the Church, and whose office of primacy was to last by divine law. Such a picture can be easily reconciled with the exclusive Petrine view since the latter doesn't absolutely require reference to St. Paul as a significant feature to the preeminence of Rome's primitive founding.

[19] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 143.

[20] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 142–51.

[21] In private correspondence, Lamberz confirmed to me that Fr. Price represents his view on this matter.

the Greek version that has falsifications of the original was the product of adulterations many decades after 787.

According to Wallach, throughout the first millennium, it had been customary procedure for bilingual pronouncements in councils with Greek and Latin bishops to have both versions read aloud, subscribed to, and then added to the official *Acts* of the Council.[22] This procedure would certainly have been followed in the reading of Hadrian's letters.[23] The adulteration of the original text was "in all probability, the product of the Photian controversy,"[24] especially in light of the fact that Greek falsification of papal documents would come to be well known by the popes.[25] Notre Dame Professor of History, Thomas F. X. Noble, noting the "learned" arguments of Wallach, comments that it is "odd that the conciliar records have the authenticating testimony of the papal legates after the pope's letters were read in 787 *if those letters had been significantly altered.*"[26] According to Drs. Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, both renowned experts in Byzantine history, the claim concerning Hadrian's letter which asserts "the Greek translation, read out eventually at the synod of 787, missed out some of the sections which would have been found most offensive to the Constantinopolitan church, *has*

[22] Luitpold Wallach, "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea, 787, and the Synodica of Hadrian I (JE 2448)," in *Diplomatic Studies in Latin and Greek Documents from the Carolingian Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 1–42. Bronwen Neil takes some issue with some of the decisions of Wallach; see Bronwen Neil, "The Western Reaction to the Council of Nicaea II," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 51.2 (2000), 533–52, accessed July 26, 2021, www.jstor.org/stable/23968388. Price also refers his readers to the scholarship of Erich Lamberz, who dates the alteration of Hadrian's letters to the 860s; see "'Falsata Graecorum more'? Die griechische Version der Briefe Papst Hadrians I. in den Akten des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils," in *Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture dedicated to Paul Speck*, eds. Claudia Sode and Sarolta Takás (Hampshire: Aldershot, Dec. 19, 1999): 213–29. See also Price's commentary on the "substantial excision" (*Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 147) of Hadrian's letter regarding the demands made by the pope on the return of the pastoral jurisdiction over Illyricum, Calabria, and Sicily, which the iconoclast Emperor Leo III confiscated in retaliation of Rome's rejection of his iconoclastic policy (see 143–47). Wallach disagrees with Ostrogorsky's "Rom und Byzanz im Kampfe um die Bilderverehrung," *Sem-Kond* 6 (1933), which is also referenced in Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State*, 184n1; see Wallach, "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea," 15n23.

[23] Wallach, "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea," 6–7.

[24] Wallach, "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea," 18.

[25] Wallach, "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea," 9–19.

[26] Thomas F. X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) 73n124 (emphasis added). Check competing scholarship as referenced by Noble. As he notes, there is another scholar who positively cites the conclusion of Wallach; see Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 400n98.

*been shown to be unlikely*."[27] Quite simply, the papal legates would have caused an uproar at such irresponsible tampering with the letters from the Apostolic See. The absence of this upheaval is strong testimony that the original Latin and Greek had the full contents that came from Hadrian's pen.

Another significant argument in support of the theory that the bishops at Nicaea II did not remove the claims to papal supremacy from Hadrian's first letter is that his second letter, addressed to Patriarch St. Tarasios, and which was read aloud at the council (also retained perfectly unadulterated in the standard Greek version of the *Acts*) "does not water down Hadrian's claim to supreme authority as the successor of Peter in the way that the Greek version of the letter to the emperors does."[28] Rome being the universal head of the Church in light of inheriting the divine promise of Christ to St. Peter in the giving of the keys and the authority of binding and loosing is clearly stated in Hadrian's second letter. If the Greeks saw the Latin original of Hadrian's letter to Irene and Constantine and purposefully downplayed (via textual alteration) the exclusivity of Peter's supreme authority and the universal headship of Rome, then why did they not make the same changes to Hadrian's second letter addressed to Tarasios?[29] In this letter the pope cites the promise of

[27] Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 267–68 (emphasis added). Brubaker and Haldon, like Fr. Price, refer to the scholarship of Lamberz (see n22 above). Through personal correspondence, Haldon shared with me that he understands the following works of Lamberz to have presented conclusive evidence for the position that the full text of Hadrian's original was read unadulterated at the second session: "'Falsata Graecorum more'?" 213–29; his detailed introduction for *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II, 3.1: *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones I–III*, ed. E. Lamberz (Berlin 2008); "Studien zur Überlieferung der Akten des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils: Der Brief Hadrians I. an Konstantin VI. und Irene (JE 2448)," *Deutsches Archiv für die Erforschung des Mittelalters* 53.1 (1997): 1–43; "Die Überlieferung und Rezeption des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils (787) in Rom und im lateinischen Westen," in *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente* (Spoleto: Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2002), 1053–1099; *Die Bischofslisten des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils (Nicaenum II)* (Munich: Abhandlungen der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004). Also, on 273n106 of his *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, Haldon with Brubaker believes that Lamberz's arguments render "irrelevant" the traditional claims that two versions of Hadrian's letters were known by both the papal legates and Patriarch St. Tarasios, and that both agreed to have the variance inserted into the official *Acts*.

[28] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 148. See also n27, where Price describes the fitting observation of Lamberz. This fact also serves as a corrective to the commentary of Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: A Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 415 and 420. See also Olivier Clément, *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 51–52.

[29] Despite this glaring inconsistency, Fr. Francis Dvornik seems to have accepted the idea that

Christ to St. Peter, the associated powers given to him in the symbol of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the Roman See's inheritance of it over the universal Church.[30] This was left in the Greek version preserved to this day. Why change one and not the other?

Another significant fact is that when Pope St. Nicholas (820–867) read the *Acts* of Nicaea II in his own day from the archives in Rome, approximately eighty years afterwards, he did not see any adulteration in Hadrian's letters but showed concern over whether the Greeks changed it *far after the council* in their own collections. In his reply letter to Emperor Michael III, Nicholas tries to prove that the former Byzantine emperors have sought the authoritative assistance of the pope of Rome, and here speaks directly to the topic at hand: "At the beginning of the acts of that Council [Nicaea II], that is, in the letter of Bishop Hadrian of pious memory—if you make a thorough search, you will doubtless find it, at least if it has not been falsified *according to Greek custom* but preserved in its original text by the Church of Constantinople."[31] Notice he refers to the falsification of Latin texts as customary to the Greeks. Toward the end of his letter to the emperor, he makes it plain that there

---

the papal claims in Hadrian's letter to Irene were adulterated but then notes that the same claims were left in his [second] letter to Tarasios (see *The Ecumenical Councils*, 44). See also Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 96–97, where again he supports the "suppression" view of Hadrian's first letter. For another scholar who holds to the "suppression" view, see Judith Herrin's *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 420. In his monumental work on the ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, Fr. Patrick O'Connell, S.J., fully accepts the scholarly conclusion made by Wallach and also asserts the very same point I'm making here: "In any event, the motivation for the changes made in the Greek should also have applied to Pope Hadrian's letter to Patriarch Tarasios, which was read next in Nicaea II" (see Patrick O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I [758–828], Patriarch of Constantinople: Pentarchy and Primacy* [Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972], 25–26). O'Connell also references the eminent Catholic historian Fr. Wilhelm De Vries as also accepting the conclusion of Wallach on Hadrian's letter (see *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 26n60, which has the reference: "Die Struktur der Kirche germäss dem II. Konzil von Nicäa (787)," *Orientalia christiana periodica* 33 (1967): 67.

[30] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 180. St. Robert Bellarmine cites from this letter: "Whose seat, it is becoming that it obtains primacy over the whole world and as the head arises over every Church of God; from where even the blessed Apostle Peter himself, feeding the Church by a command of God, altogether overlooks nothing, rather obtained and obtains supremacy everywhere" (Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Tomus II*, vol. 1, *On the Roman Pontiff*, 230).

[31] Pope St. Nicholas, Letter to Emperor Michael III (August 865), Mansi 15.187–261; *PL* 119.926–62; MGH, Epistolae 6.454–87), in *Church and State in Early Christianity*, by Hugo Rahner, 288 (emphasis mine).

were no changes to the Hadrianic letters that would have been accepted by Rome: "Let him be cursed who in the process of translating the letter into Greek should change the text, or either omit from it or add to it, beyond the demands dictated by Greek style (*'ex ea quicquam mutaverit vel subtraxerit aut superaddiderit, praeter illud quod idioma Graecae dictionis exigit'*)."[32]

But if the letters of Hadrian were tampered with at the council, then it would have been done with the approval of the papal legates, in which case the finished *Acts* in Latin and Greek collected would have been archived at Rome with the supposed deletions of papal prerogatives. No evidence of that exists. If that had happened, Pope St. Nicholas would not have been able to say what he said above since he would have been aware of a variance from Hadrian's original and the modified version at the council. This is a significant fact that pushes against the theory of excisions from the Greek letters of Hadrian. It stands to reason that if the bishops were hunting for ways to avoid having papal claims put into the official *Acts* of an ecumenical council such that they omitted or watered them down from Hadrian's first letter to Irene, they would have been meticulous enough to make the same changes to Hadrian's second letter.[33] No such thing exists. This gives strong indication that the changes to Hadrian's first letter in the preserved Greek manuscripts were made at some point after its clear acceptance at the council.[34]

If the authenticity of Hadrian's first letter is established, it would make for tremendous progress in the Orthodox debates over the papacy. Fr. Laurent Cleenewerck, an Orthodox theologian, assesses the Seventh Ecumenical Council as the "highest point of recognition" of the papal theory by the East, and one of the reasons he gives is that the acceptance of Hadrian's letters by the council was a "total recognition that the pope of Rome held Peter's See, and that Rome was in a unique way heir of

[32] Pope St. Nicholas, *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, Epistolae 6.487.21, in "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea," by Wallach, 9.

[33] Fr. Dvornik, commenting on the Hadrian's second letter states: "The Fathers could not help but subscribe to the affirmation of the Pope that the Church of Rome was the head of all the churches since that had been solidly confirmed by the councils" (*Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 100n32). The same precise claim that Hadrian made was explicitly stated by Philip the Legate at the Council of Ephesus (431) and was then fully accepted by the bishops convened under St. Cyril of Alexandria. It would be bold to reject these claims since the indisputable history couldn't be clearer.

[34] What is left unexplained is if Hadrian's first letter was falsified at or around 858 (or during the duration Photian controversy), why didn't the Byzantines do the same for the letter to Tarasios.

Christ's promises to Peter."[35] Unsurprisingly, Fr. Vladimir Guettée asserts that the "true creator of the modern papacy" was Hadrian I.[36]

For the sake of argument, let us say that the Byzantines, contrary to the above evidence, did modify the letters of Hadrian. After all, that is the traditional perspective among scholars. What then? Well, for starters, it would mean that what the Greeks originally read were papal claims that they thought were intolerable and unworthy to be held by Christians. In other words, if they gutted the papal claims from the letters of Hadrian, it would mean they knew that Pope Hadrian held to these "intolerable" beliefs, went forward with changing the text, and praised the faith of the pope anyway.[37] It also means that they could not sustain a "Byzantine flattery" reading of the claims; otherwise, the Greeks would have proudly played along with it. If the contemporary Orthodox insist that Hadrian's letters were modified in this way, they would also forfeit the availability of the "papal theologoumenon" explanation, where Rome was allowed to air out its private opinions about its prerogative while everyone else had their own different opinion about it. Rather, this theory of epistle modification would have the Greeks outright rejecting something they see being objectively and concretely asserted, and which they believed was erroneous. There is more.

If the Greek bishops employed the above tactic, it would also be another instance, similar to the hypothetical situation of the Oriental bishops making up their own *libelli* to replace the Formula of Hormisdas, where the Easterners are purported by some to have both known of the "erroneous" papal claims of Rome but *failed to condemn it.* Not only that, but they maintained communion with someone whose confession they could not share in and even praised the letter in the second session of the

[35] Laurent Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* (Washington, DC: Euclid University Press, 2007), 200.

[36] Fr. Vladimir Guettée, DD, *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867), 261.

[37] In his *History of the Byzantine State,* Ostrogorsky argues forcefully for this view (183–84): "The relevant passage in the message of Pope Hadrian I to the Byzantine rulers was simply omitted from the Greek translation read before the Council. Those clauses in which the Pope claimed the right to censure the uncanonical consecration of the patriarch Tarasios and to protest against the title of 'oecumenical' Patriarch were likewise deleted; and the many passages in the papal communication which raised the question of the rights of primacy of Rome, or even only of the primacy of St. Peter, were carefully suppressed." As noted by Fr. Richard Price, this conclusion is contrary to the facts.

council in startling terminology. This is simply out of character for Greek bishops who are usually hunting and condemning heresies left and right.

The manner in which the council Fathers approached the delicacy of Apostolic Tradition regarding the veneration of holy images, as well as their fierce condemnation of all who departed from said Tradition, points to a group of folks who were meticulous to root out heresy and were not afraid to extinguish it.[38] If Hadrian's letters contained unacceptable content, akin to the "heretical" *Filioque*, and if they went through with the trouble of changing his letter, they would have certainly also confronted the error in a formal manner. In sum, if the Greeks erased portions of Hadrian's letter, they would have done it because they sensed in it heretical novelty, and if so, they would have also made sure to correct the bishop of Rome on the matter. Yet, there is no sign of such a correction being made, and so this militates against the theory that the Greeks tampered with the letters of Hadrian. The more this theory gets tested, the more it proves itself false.

There is further corroborating evidence. One of St. Tarasios's letters to the pope after the Council of Nicaea (787) includes the following after a description of the condemnation of simony (purchasing priestly office with money): "The divine apostle Peter, *to whose see your fraternal holiness has been appointed*, condemned them in condemning Simon Magus," and that the universal Church recognizes that the Roman See is "presiding lawfully and by God's will *over the holy hierarchs*."[39] Occupation of St. Peter's Seat and the universal headship was clearly accepted, and St. Tarasios felt no need to add in there a *Pauline element* to try to supposedly offset the *Petrine exclusivity*.

Besides all the above, there is no hint of opposition to the literature from Rome. At the close of the second session, after all of Hadrian's epistles had been read, no Greek bishop showed any concern at all, but rather all solemnly accepted them.[40] Both letters were "warmly received, and the council adopted the pope's teaching, an echo of the triumph of Leo the Great at Chalcedon."[41] Each bishop rose up and gave his official agreement with the letter. This is enormously significant, for when Byzantines

[38] Evidence of this was the synodikon of Pope St. Theodore in the seventh century, which included a Filioque statement, i.e., that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Greek readers protested this, and it took St. Maximus's theological nuance to conciliate the matter.

[39] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 632 (emphasis added).

[40] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 151.

[41] Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, third ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 91.

received a letter into the official *Acts* of a council, such as at the Council of Chalcedon when by the letter of Ibas he was judged orthodox, it was ranked on the same level of infallibility as all other parts of the council. Thus, by accepting Hadrian's letters, the council was saying the letters cannot be rejected in any way.[42]

Perhaps even more interesting than the above is the council's confrontation of the pseudo-council of Hieria (754), which had condemned the veneration of icons. This council had called itself ecumenical, was convened by the Byzantine emperor, and had more than three hundred bishops in attendance. If anyone wanted raw conciliarism, there it was. Nevertheless, this council was judged invalid because, in the first place, "neither the Roman pope nor the bishops around him cooperated in it, either through delegates or letter, *which is the law of councils*."[43] In other words, the "ecumenical" Council of Hieria (754) was null and void because it broke the rules of ecumenical councils, namely, obtaining the pope's acceptance of its decrees. Breaking these rules was not new, as it was attempted by the Emperor Justinian I at the Council of Constantinople (553). Having the need of the pope's acceptance of a council's decrees, however, was known by the wider Church, and it afforded the Byzantine Fathers of the council a hefty refutation against Hieria.

One prominent iconodule[44] saint, venerated by the Orthodox Church (Nov 28), St. Stephen the Younger (713–764), bears a significant testimony to this fact. Baptized by St. Germanos I (634–740), he went on to found a monastery on Mount Auxentios, which became "a center of monastic resistance against the iconoclastic policy of Constantine V."[45] He would eventually die as a martyr for his rejection of the Council of Hieria. About the authoritative standing of this council, St. Stephen wrote that "according to the prescriptions of the canons, religious matters *cannot be defined* without the participation of the pope of Rome."[46]

---

[42] See especially the manner in which St. Tarasios exults in the letters of Hadrian (Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 182–95), as well how the Bishops of the Council received them in the second session (Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 627–28).

[43] Mansi 13.208–09, cited in *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present*, by Klaus Schatz, S.J. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 57.

[44] An iconodule is a supporter of the veneration of icons.

[45] *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, eds. Alexander P. Kazhdan, et al., s.v. "Stephen the Younger" (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1955.

[46] *PG* 100.1144, in *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, by Dvornik, 95 (emphasis added). On this point, St. Stephen, St. Nicephorus, and the Council of Nicaea II were in emphatic agreement, and the origins of this rule stem back to the historian Socrates Scholasticus in the mid-fifth century when recounting the supposed "canon" of Pope St. Julius (341) that his

These words were said more than a decade before the convocation of Nicaea II (787). Fr. Klaus Schatz aptly comments on the singular place of Rome in relation to the other patriarchs when it comes to the rules of ecumenical councils: "Rome is singled out. It must 'cooperate,' while that of the others is more receptive."[47]

Another distinguished iconodule saint who gave the same testimony was St. Nicephorus of Constantinople (758–828). Speaking years after Nicaea II was completed, he defended the practice of icon veneration against another freshly held iconoclast Council of Constantinople (815) on the status of Nicaea II, and concerning it he says:

> For above all it was gathered together properly and most lawfully, because there *led the way* in it and presided according to the divine customs established from of old:—some, a not inconsiderable part, of the Western region (λῆξις), that is, of ancient Rome—*without whom* (plural) if a doctrine is questioned in the Church, which has been *acknowledged* from of old by canonical rules and priestly customs, *it may not pass scrutiny or be regarded as settled*: because in truth they have inherited the *position of leadership* in the priesthood, and have been entrusted with the dignity of the Leaders [Peter and Paul] among *the apostles*. [48]

Here, we see that "even in Ecumenical Councils there is here predicated of Rome more than a primacy of honour, indeed a leadership of true jurisdiction,"[49] and a jurisdiction that is not traceable to canons or councils purely but back to the primatial duo of Sts. Peter and Paul in the Roman church. These are merely echoes of the papal claims as

Byzantine opponents were violating in their condemnation of St. Athanasius; see Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy*, 46n5.

[47] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 57.

[48] St. Nicephorus, *Apologeticus major*, PG 100.597A, in *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, by O'Connell, 181 (emphasis added). It should be noted that St. Nicephorus included the cooperation of the other patriarchs as well (see O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 139), though he attributed only civil preeminence to Constantinople rather than the apostolic inheritance of Rome. Of course, what also can't be denied was the privileged position of the Roman See, regardless of the cooperation of the others. Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., when commenting on this passage, notes the "singular position" accorded to Rome: "Its [Rome's] cooperation is simply irreplaceable, while the others are mentioned more as a collective or group, it appears that everything does not depend so unequivocally on each individual patriarch" (*Papal Primacy*, 57).

[49] O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 184.

they were given as far back as Pope St. Damasus (382). The Council of Hieria, therefore, certainly gets disqualified. How the Greeks never thought to offer a substantial commentary on how they understood this with respect to Constantinople (381), which had no Roman involvement, nor for Constantinople II (553), which sought to finalize their decrees without (even against!) the pope, is left for one to wonder.[50] It seems as though that history was forgotten. What matters here is that these two renowned saints of Byzantium reminded their peers of something that the Greek historian Socrates Scholasticus made plain centuries prior.[51] St. Nicephorus said nothing different than this, and therefore he was merely referring to an ancient principle of Church law.

To further highlight this prerogative of the Apostolic See of Rome, the third session of Nicaea II included a statement on why the Council of Nicaea (787) should doubtlessly have been credited ecumenical value, despite the fact that the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem *were not present*, due to the harsh conditions of Arab captivity (a valid reason to call ecumenicity into question). In place of the Eastern patriarchs, representatives were sent to bring letters to the council, representing the view of the absent patriarchs.[52] In one of these, addressed to patriarch St. Tarasios from "the high priests and priests of the east,"[53] they wrote that despite their absence, the council should suffer no lack of authority "*especially since* the most holy and apostolic pope of Rome has *expressed his agreement* with it and is *cooperating through his* apocrisiarii. . . . [T]hrough your help and that of the *one who directs the apostolic see of the chief* (of the apostles), the faith of the council about to assemble by the grace of Christ will be proclaimed in the whole world beneath the

[50] I should say there is no known record of such an explanation. The Sixth Council appears to think that St. Damasus was involved in its convocation with Theodosius I, but historians aren't nearly as confident of the claim.

[51] In *Church History* 2.8, *New Advent*, Socrates Scholasticus wrote: "Neither was Julius, bishop of the great Rome, there, nor had he sent a substitute, although an ecclesiastical canon commands that the churches shall not make any ordinances against the opinion of the bishop of Rome" (Socrates Scholasticus, *Church History* 2.8, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. A. C. Zenos [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890], rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26012.htm).

[52] While Alexandria and Antioch managed to orchestrate their representation, if truly done, by these two representatives, Jerusalem couldn't even provide that; see Hans-Georg Beck, "The Greek Church in the Epoch of Iconoclasm," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History*, trans. Anselm Biggs, eds. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 34.

[53] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 215.

sun."[54] This letter, if authentic, situates the pope of Rome in a uniquely privileged position in relation to the apostolic faith and the ecumenicity of a council.

Even though there is a sense in which the Eastern patriarchs were included through certain representatives, there was an unavoidable uniqueness saved for Rome, who was also said to be the *See of Peter*, the "chief." While one might point out that Eastern representatives were still involved in the process, illustrating a clear conciliar picture, it cannot be denied that amidst the patriarchal organization, the Apostolic See of Rome had a unique position of authority and a legitimizing influence. The question is, what did the Fathers believe was the nature of that uniqueness? Was it to be essentially distinguished with the status of the patriarchal constitution?

According to Fr. Patrick O'Connell, S.J., St. Nicephorus saw the Church governed by the five patriarchs, that is, the *Pentarchy*. The ordinary leadership of the whole Church, East and West, would have required the cooperation of these patriarchs. For councils to be ecumenical, the Pentarchy should be present (in some way) and approve of its decrees. After attributing the supremely unique prerogative of Rome vis-à-vis ecumenical councils, St. Nicephorus speaks to the Pentarchic constitution:

> It is the *ancient law of the Church* that whatever uncertainties or controversies arise in the Church of God, *they are resolved and defined by the ecumenical synods*, with the assent and approbation of the bishops who hold the *apostolic sees*.[55]

This emphasis on the five patriarchs is not a magical reality that was foisted upon the Church in later centuries. It merely represents the fullness of ecclesial territory in the known world. The churches under the sun were headed by the chiefs, and there happened to be five at this time. However, without a synthesis of St. Nicephorus's thought, this can be a one-sided emphasis and would fail to give full justice to his overall perspective. To be equal and fair, attempting to say that he held to a contemporary synthesis on councils and authority that matches *Pastor Aeternus* (1870) is just as unbalanced a statement as saying that he held

[54] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 219–20 (emphasis added).

[55] St. Nicephorus, *PG* 100.597BC, in *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, by Dvornik, 102 (emphasis added).

the five patriarchs to be equal in all ways. Summing his view into a neat balance, Fr. O'Connell states:

> The harmony of the patriarchs is produced by the Holy Spirit. But the faith of all must be tested, if no other means are available, by the *sure guide* of the faith of the Roman see. Thus, logically, one might deduce that, whereas the notion of the patriarchs in Nicephorus expresses the catholicity of the Church in unity of faith, *that element in the visible organisation of the Church which stands for unity of faith through the grace of the Holy Spirit is the see of Rome.*[56]

Another influential saint, especially venerated by the Orthodox, was St. Theodore the Studite, Abbot of the Studite Monastery, who was a close contemporary to St. Nicephorus. Falling victim to Eastern betrayal against the legitimacy of image veneration with the second wave of iconoclasm (814) under Leo "the Armenian" (813–820), St. Theodore appealed to the strong foundation of orthodoxy in the Roman See. It was, reports Jalland, the first time since Constantine in the fourth century that Eastern churchmen sought liberation from the Byzantine imperium for the codification of dogma by an appeal "to the authority of the Roman see against the emperor."[57] However, this phenomenon of Roman orthodoxy was not a mere accident. Rather, St. Theodore insisted on an *a priori* reason for it. The Roman bishopric is the beneficiary of the sacred rights bestowed upon the Apostle Peter, who himself was chosen by the Lord Jesus to possess the keys of the kingdom of heaven with which to govern the universal Church by divine institution.[58]

While in exile, St. Theodore wrote to Pope Paschal I (817–824) pleading for an intervention to defend the veneration of images, which he thought the pope could enact because of certain possessed prerogatives.

---

[56] O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 194 (emphasis added). For a brief explanation for how the Pentarchic conception of the Byzantines was not meant to undermine the unique status of Rome as the universal head, see Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 103–04. For criticism of the Pentarchic concept, see Joseph Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate, and Apostolic Succession," in *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, by Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), 58–59.

[57] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 329.

[58] O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 211; O'Connell relies heavily on the scholarship of Fr. Sévérian Salaville in "La Primauté de Saint Pierre et du Papae d'après Saint Théodore (759–826)," *EO* 17 (1914–1915): 23–42.

Speaking on behalf of the iconodule monks in Constantinople, he urged the pope to "scare the heretical beasts with the *whip of your words*," and "let it be heard that those who have dared these things synodically and anathematized the Holy fathers are themselves *anathematized by you*."[59] He further told the pope that he was "Peter . . . preeminently holy, the great light, the supreme bishop, and our lord . . . the key-bearer of the kingdom of heaven, the rock of faith on which the Catholic Church is built."[60] He continued:

> Listen to us O Apostolic Head, *charged by God with the guidance of Christ's sheep*, porter of the heavenly kingdom, rock of the faith on which is built the Catholic Church, for you are *Peter*, you are the successor of Peter, *whose throne you honourably fill*.[61]

In that same letter, he continued:

> To thee spake Christ our Lord: "And thou being one day converted, shalt strengthen thy brethren." Behold the hour and the place. *Help us, thou that art set by God for this. Stretch forth thy hand so far as thou canst. Thou hast strength with God, through being the first [Primate] of all.*[62]

Apparently, the cry of St. Theodore was heard since Pope Paschal sent a document to Constantinople to be delivered to the emperor which robustly defended the orthodox practice of venerating images.[63] Regardless that the situation was an extraordinary one, St. Theodore clearly believed that the nature of Rome's prerogative was one involving

---

[59] St. Theodore, Letters 271.401 and 272.402–3, from "The Politics of Salvation: Theodore of Stoudios on Martyrdom ('Martyrion') and Speaking out ('Parrhesid')," by Peter Hatlie, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996), 274 (emphasis added).

[60] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 337.

[61] Theodore the Studite, Epistle 12, *PG* 99.1152–53, in *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, *The Eastern Roman Empire (717–1453)*, planned by J. B. Bury, eds. J. R. Tanner, C. W. Previtè-Orton, and Z. N. Brooke (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1923), 32 (emphasis added).

[62] Theodore the Studite, Epistle 12, in *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility*, by John Chapman, O.S.B. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 74.

[63] J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire: From the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I, A.D. 802–867* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1912), 115.

the potential to "help" and "stretch" far off into Eastern affairs and to apply divine judgment in aid of Christ's flock. This is nothing less than a "true pastoral jurisdiction over the whole Church,"[64] and St. Theodore roots said prerogative in the commission and promise of Jesus Christ to St. Peter.[65]

Consequently, the "authority of the pope was the final one," even higher than councils and patriarchs, "having the power from God, as holding the first place of all," being "the original source of orthodoxy."[66] As the late Byzantine historian Dr. John B. Bury once said, "the Studite theory of the supremacy of the Roman See in the ecclesiastical affairs of Christendom had been asserted *without any disguise*," and, contrary to the "constitutional theory" of the emperor as the guardian of the truth, St. Theodore held that the "controversy could only be settled by the cooperation of the Pope."[67] E. Symonds goes so far as to say that the terminology of St. Theodore about the Roman See far surpasses "Byzantine adulation,"[68] and is "almost blasphemous."[69] Again, the sheer content of these claims cannot possibly be explained by Byzantine flattery nor hyperbolic praise. What was at stake in St. Theodore's day was the faith itself, and the cry was for a real organ of authority to come to the Church's aid.

In 795, some years before the above recorded appeal to Pope Paschal I, St. Theodore and his monks had opposed Emperor Constantine VI for unlawfully putting away his wife Maria and taking another woman, named Theodote, as his "wife."[70] St. Tarasios, the patriarch of Constantinople, permitted this but turned to one of his presbyters, Joseph, to perform the ceremony in his stead. This was known as the *Moechian* controversy.[71] St. Theodore's protest against this act of divorce and remarriage resulted in him being exiled until Constantine VI died, after which he was recalled.[72] Upon his return, he found himself exiled again because he

[64] O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 211.

[65] Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy*, 200.

[66] Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy*, 190–91.

[67] Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 115 (emphasis added).

[68] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 224.

[69] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 225.

[70] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 109–10.

[71] Μοιχεία is Greek for "adultery."

[72] S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 300.

still protested the clergy who were in favor of the second "marriage."[73] He then appealed to Pope St. Leo III (795–816), begging him to "take action against"[74] the emperor, to "step forward to teach, as Christ had, and involve himself in Byzantine Church affairs,"[75] all which implied both the pope's right of initiative and his jurisdiction over Constantinople. Theodore wrote:

> Since Christ our God has granted to the great Peter, in addition to the *keys to the kingdom* of heaven, the dignity of being the *first* [*Primate*] among pastors, *it is necessary to report to Peter or his successor* everything new that has been introduced in the catholic Church by those deviating from the truth. Thus, having learned to do this from our *ancient holy fathers*, we too, the most humble and lowly of all, in view of the innovation introduced to our Church, consider it our duty . . . to report this to the Angel of your supreme beatitude in our humble letter.[76]

For St. Theodore, it was necessary to "report" to the pope on matters which threatened the Christian faith. Why? Did he appeal, in the first place, to an ecclesiastical custom? Rather, he appealed because Christ who is God gave St. Peter the keys and made him the universal primate. Since he attributed this to St. Leo III, it stands to reason he understood that everything invested by Christ in St. Peter was inherited by the successor of St. Peter. Because the bishop of Rome possessed these keys, he was the judge of what was acceptable or unacceptable that was introduced into the Church. Noteworthy here is that he stated that he had learned about this reality and the need to report to the pope from none other than the "*ancient holy fathers*." This means that when St. Theodore read Church history, he saw that prior deviations from the faith were both referred to the Roman church and presumably resolved by the same. Lastly, this was not a matter of convenience, pragmatism, or a strategic advantage. Rather, St. Theodore stated that it is the "duty" of all pastors to report to the pope, which signifies that the occupant of

[73] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 300–301.

[74] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 224.

[75] Hatlie, "The Politics of Salvation," 273–74.

[76] Theodore the Studite, Epistle 33, *PG* 99.1017, in *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 109 (emphasis added).

St. Peter's Chair holds a binding position of authority over the whole Church. Greek Orthodox theologian Fr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis comments on this passage:

> This view was "always taught by our Fathers," that is, it was not a personal sentiment of St. Theodore but a *perennial belief shared by the Fathers of old.* The history of the first millennium leaves no room for doubting that the *pope's primacy in terms of such Petrine ministry was universally acknowledged and accepted even by the Greek-speaking Church.*[77]

St. Theodore went on in the same letter to request St. Leo III to follow the example of Pope St. Leo the Great, who "stood erect spiritually as a lion with his dogmatic letters"[78] and roared against heresy. That means that the history of St. Leo the Great was one example in which St. Theodore saw this Petrine supremacy at work. Further along in the letter, St. Theodore complained of a certain synod held in the East at which the "remarriage" of the emperor was defended. He continues:

> For if they, usurping an authority which does not belong to them, have dared to convene a heretical council,[79] while those who, following ancient custom, have not even the right of convoking an orthodox one without your knowledge, it seems absolutely necessary, we dare to say it to you, that Your Divine primacy should call together a lawful council,

[77] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 36 (emphasis added).

[78] Theodore the Studite, Epistle 33, *PG* 99.1017, translated by S. Herbert Scott in *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 302 (emphasis added). To speak of St. Leo the Great as a spiritually empowered roaring lion whose dogmatic letters fought against heresy is particularly interesting. Here is a ninth century Greek abbot of the Studite Monastery in Constantinople, who read the history of St. Leo the Great against Eutyches, Dioscorus, and the Council of Ephesus (449) with his dogmatic Tome as an exemplary instance of St. Peter rising up with keys and condemning novelties from his position as the primate of all the churches. That is a much different picture of St. Leo than, say, both Denny and Puller, both of whom say that in St. Leo, the "orthodox" understanding of primacy was distorted by his high claims to jurisdiction over the whole Church. What could possibly explain the divergence between St. Theodore and modern papal critics?

[79] This is in reference to a council called in Constantinople in 809 that eventually confirmed the lawfulness of Constantine VI's divorce and remarriage; see Bury, *Cambridge Medieval History*, eds. Tanner, Previté-Orton, and Brooke, 28.

> so that the Catholic dogma may drive away heresy and that neither Your primacy may be anathematized with all the orthodox by these new voices without authority. . . . It is in order to obey Your Divine authority as Chief Pastor that we have set forth these things as it befitted our nothingness, we the least members of the Church. For the rest we beg your Holiness to count us among your sheep and to enlighten and to strength us by your holy prayers.[80]

This section is extremely illuminating. St. Theodore refers to contemporary enemies in the East who "usurp" the authority to convene a council. This would entail that, for St. Theodore, the convocation of a council requires proper authority to do so, without which the attempt to do so is "usurping" that authority. If that is true, then when St. Theodore called Pope St. Leo III to convene a council, he presumed the pope would not be usurping authority in doing so, and that is because St. Theodore believed that the pope had the jurisdiction to call a council. In this sense, he echoes St. Maximus the Confessor who boldly rejected the idea that an emperor is intrinsically necessary for a council and followed along with Pope St. Martin I's council in Rome (649).[81]

It is summarily stated by the Byzantine historian Dr. Paul J. Alexander: "The synod held by his [Theodore's] opponents is void since even an orthodox council cannot be convened *without the consent of the Pope.* It is all the more advisable that the pope assemble an orthodox synod in which he would denounce the heretical decision of the Synod of Constantinople."[82] It should also not be missed here that by St. Theodore's call for Pope St. Leo III to rise up like St. Leo I, this confirms that he understood the Council of Ephesus (449) and fifth century Eutychianism to have been dogmatically resolved by an intervention of St. Peter's supreme authority.

Unfortunately, Pope St. Leo III did not rise like a lion, and declined to take part in the quarrel, urging the affected Easterners to patience,[83]

---

[80] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 302.

[81] Dvornik records that St. Theodore accepted the right of the emperor to convoke ecumenical councils, but "he insisted on the preponderant role which the Popes had enjoyed on the occasions of certain councils" (*Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 95).

[82] Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 94 (emphasis added).

[83] Beck, "The Greek Church in the Epoch of Iconoclasm," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History*, eds. Jedin and Dolan, 40.

which surely "disappointed St. Theodore the Studite," and probably went against his expectations.[84] It is reported in the *Life of Theodore* by his biographer that the pope eventually spoke out[85] and possibly aided in the resolution of the Moechian controversy. Even so, the initial reaction of St. Theodore was one of gross disappointment:

> *What do we care whether the Pope acts in one way or another*? You have to admit that he has been caught in his own nets as the proverb goes. For by saying that he was not concerned about the manifest sins of the priest [Joseph of Kathara],[86] he jeered and abused not some little priest but the head of the Church [Jesus Christ] so much that we felt ashamed even when we heard of it. If this is true, *alas for the hierarchy*! But please, let us move our tongue discreetly against the heads [of the Church] and let us not denounce them so bitterly.[87]

To return to the subject of images and to further drive the point that St. Theodore was not working with a mere rhetorical strategy based on some theologoumenical Petrine legend, he wrote the following to a state official named Leo who resided in Constantinople over what to do in the matter of icons:

> Let him (the Patriarch Nicephorus) assemble a synod of those with whom he has been at variance, if it is impossible that representatives of the other Patriarchs should be present, a thing which might certainly be, if the Emperor should wish the Western (Patriarch) to be present, *to whom is given the authority* (κράτος) *over an ecumenical synod;* but let him make peace and union, by sending his synodical letters to the prelate of the first see.[88]

---

[84] George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 115.

[85] Beck, "The Greek Church in the Epoch of Iconoclasm," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History*, eds. Jedin and Dolan, 40.

[86] The presbyter under Patriarch Tarasios, who performed the unlawful wedding ceremony.

[87] Epistle 1.28, *PG* 99.1001A, in *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, by Alexander, 94 (emphasis added). At most, St. Theodore here expresses his shame at the pope's poor decision. By his saying, "Alas the hierarchy!" he shows that he is calling shame to the normative authority of the visible Church's government, which can certainly drop the ball in many ways.

[88] Theodore the Studite, book II, epistle 129, *PG* 99.1420 in *The First Eight General Councils and*

St. Theodore even went so far as to make statements from which papal infallibility was reasonably inferred. Alongside other Greek monks, St. Theodore wrote a letter to be delivered to the iconoclastic synod of Constantinople 815, a portion of which is here translated:

> We venerate images . . . not because we are *assured* that we are right by the second holy synod of Nicaea or by that which earlier decided divinely, but from the very coming of our Lord and God in writing and without Writing *we have been made firm and rest securely upon that see to which Christ saith*: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against."[89]

Now, these words are the words of the Lord Jesus to St. Peter and not directly to the Roman church. These connections are made only because the Roman church is understood to have received St. Peter's office in perpetuity after his martyrdom. This connection was echoed in St. Maximus the Confessor in his statements recorded above concerning the See of Rome as rooted in the promises of Christ to the person of St. Peter. This is confirmed also by statements made in Theodore's letter addressed to "his son Naucratius":

> I witness now before God and men, they have torn themselves away from the Body of Christ, from the *supreme see* (τοῦ κορυφαϊκοῦ θρόνου), in which Christ placed the *keys of the faith*, against which the gates of hell (I mean the mouths of heretics) have not prevailed, and *never will* until the consummation, according to the promise of Him who cannot lie. Let the most blessed and apostolic Paschal rejoice therefore, *for he has fulfilled the work of Peter.*[90]

---

*Papal Infallibility*, by Chapman, 75 (emphasis added).

[89] Theodore the Studite, book II, epistle 1, *PG* 99.1117 in *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility*, by Chapman, 76 (emphasis added). St. Theodore's words here are even more interesting given the fact that, at least one time in his life, he questioned the ecumenicity of Nicaea (787) because Pope Hadrian I did not ratify it as such: "Rome, however . . . did not recognize the council itself as universal but as local and as correcting the private error of people here" (see Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, 105). Later in his life, St. Theodore would refer to the council as universal, perhaps on account of the pope's acceptance of the doctrinal content.

[90] *PG* 99.1281, in *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility*, by Chapman, 76n3 (emphasis added).

In another letter to Pope Paschal, he writes:

> You therefore are the untroubled and sincere well of orthodoxy *from the beginning*; you are the untroubled inland haven of the whole Church from every heretical storm; you are the God-chosen city of refuge for salvation.[91]

St. Theodore also bears witness to the doctrine of Rome as the principle of unity and ecclesial communion. In a letter addressed to a new Emperor Michael II (820–829), he implored the emperor to rectify the schismatic status of Constantinople (again meddling in iconoclasm) by union "with Rome, the Head (κορυφή) of the Churches of God, and *through Rome* (δι αὐτῆς) with the (other) three patriarchs."[92] This is significant because a direct linkage with the Roman See would automatically then conjoin the other orthodox patriarchs, showing Rome to be the principle of the unity and communion.

In all these statements, it is made clear that, for St. Theodore, the Roman See was the inheritor of those authoritative prerogatives given by Christ to St. Peter by which to govern the universal Church. Rome is the supreme and final tribunal on doctrine to whom questions of faith are to be deferred, and the pope of Rome has power over an ecumenical council. Rome has the special privilege of being the unique benefactor of the promise given to St. Peter that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church and that it is "through Rome" that the members of Christ's flock are united to the universal communion of churches.

What more could be asked for in order to see that St. Theodore followed the thinking of those many voices who came before, not least of which was St. Maximus? Of course, there are academics who explore the options and come to different interpretations.[93] There are Eastern Orthodox interpreters who see in St. Theodore nothing other than rhetorical strategy reflecting the common Byzantine epistolary style of the time.[94] Fr. Patrick O'Connell points to how St. Theodore "brings in scripture and

[91] Theodore the Studite, book II, epistle 13, *PG* 99.1156A, in *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, by O'Connell, 213 (emphasis added).

[92] Theodore the Studite, Epistle to Michael II, book II, epistle 74, *PG* 99.1309C, in *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, by O'Connell, 214 (emphasis added).

[93] O'Connell surveys some of the Eastern Orthodox interpretations of St. Theodore; see *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 215–29.

[94] After all, there are exaggerations made all over the place with regard to praise-statements toward the Byzantine Emperor or the "God-inspired" letter of any ordinary bishop to the aid of the Church. These things were common, and it would be irresponsible to ignore that.

history to justify what he says," believes heretics must be "denounced to Rome, because there is to be found the successor of Peter to whom the Lord gave the keys," and that many of St. Theodore's statements were addressed to fellow Easterners (removing the motive to make flattering prose) as compelling reasons to reject the idea that he was merely using rhetorical exaggeration.[95]

But what of St. Theodore's conception of the Pentarchic government of the Church, consisting of the five patriarchs? He said that the duty of Church government belongs to the "Apostles and their successors,"[96] and listed the patriarchs in order from Rome, as first, and then the rest beginning with Constantinople down to Jerusalem.[97] Here was clearly delineated the Pentarchic theory, *a rule of five heads*. Does this contradict St. Theodore's other statements where Rome was exclaimed as the head of all the Churches? As O'Connell points out, there are two dimensions to St. Theodore's conception of supreme ecclesial government: that of the Pentarchy and then that of the successor of St. Peter. One should not isolate the Pentarchic view, as if it is meant to be understood apart from, or even to diminish, the Petrine view, nor *vice versa*. The two "must be kept together in arriving at a final judgment," and consequently, "the patriarchs may not be considered apart from the many texts in which Theodore insists on the primacy of Rome."[98]

If understood through these lenses, then Rome's unique position of an all-embracing universal authority is maintained, and the Pentarchic body itself must orbit around its own central head, the See of Peter itself. By this notion of being *first*, as he stated above, St. Theodore had a rather strong concept of what that means. Continuing from his seventy-fourth epistle, where he stated that by uniting with Rome, the other patriarchs get linked into communion as well, he continued in his bid to Emperor Michael II on behalf of fixing the status of Constantinople:

> Order that the exposition of faith sent from Old Rome be received, following what has been the practice *from all time by our fathers*. For this Church, O Emperor, imitator of Christ, is the *first* (ἡ κορυφαιοτάτη) of all the Churches of

[95] O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 217.

[96] Theodore, *PG* 99.1417, in *Papal Primacy*, by Schatz, 49.

[97] Theodore, *PG* 99.1417, in *Papal Primacy*, by Schatz, 49 (emphasis added).

[98] O'Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I*, 217.

> God. Peter is its first bishop, Peter, to whom the Lord said, "Thou art Peter, etc."[99]

These words are particularly revealing as it shows how he understood the papacy's historic past. He appealed to the "practice from all time by our fathers" as the way the East received expositions of the faith from Rome. When and if there was a doubtful matter in the case of doctrine, St. Theodore believed that the duty to consult with the Apostolic See was so prevalent in both his day and from the history of the Church that he called the task "inherited tradition." He wrote: "If there is anything in the patriarch's reply about which you feel doubt or disbelief . . . you may ask the elder Rome for clarification, as has been the practice from the beginning according to *inherited tradition*."[100] St. Theodore denied that such prerogative was based on the imperial status of Rome or some canonical privilege and rooted it entirely in the Petrine investiture. The Roman exposition of orthodoxy was normative for even the second throne (Constantinople), and therefore for all other thrones in the Pentarchy. To corroborate this, the Latin (though, Greek speaking) librarian Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who was proficient in Greek literature, provides what might be considered a Roman frame of the Pentarchic theory. For him, Jesus Christ's Mystical Body, that is, the Church, has a total of five senses, akin to the senses of the human body (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch), and as long as these senses work properly, the Church is in good health. Furthermore, since Rome is the first and chief among the five patriarchs, it has the sense of sight "since it remains, more than any of the other senses, *in communion with the whole body*."[101] In other words, where the body is injured if it lacks in the ability to touch, taste, smell, or hear, the faculty of vision is closest to the body's necessary vitality. I suppose the idea is that one would want any of the other defects before being

[99] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 308–09 (emphasis added).

[100] Theodore, Letters, II.86, *PG* 99.1332A, translated by Timothy Ware in "Primacy, Collegiality, and the People of God," in *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*, ed. John Chryssavgis (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 99 (emphasis added). What history was St. Theodore reading that might have led him to this disposition toward the authority of the See of St. Peter? Being a ninth century man, he surely knew about the seventh century story of Honorius, the sixth century story of Vigilius, the fourth century story of Liberius, and perhaps the third century story of Pope Marcellinus, who reportedly committed idolatry under the duress of persecution. It would seem he was able to see the grand theme of the Apostolic See coming to the rescue of the faith as it did under St. Damasus, St. Innocent, St. Leo the Great, St. Theodore, St. Martin, and St. Agatho.

[101] Mansi 16.7, in *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, by Dvornik, 104 (emphasis added).

blind. Of course, that is all debatable, but the clear gradation between Rome and the "other patriarchs" manifests the subordination of the latter to the primacy of the former.

The Pentarchic theory does not carry any essential aspect that would contradict the papal doctrines codified at the First Vatican Council. That the head of the Body must never become a bodiless head is just as important to avoid as a headless body. Consequently, as Pope emeritus Benedict XVI aptly concluded, "Vatican II correctly taught us that *collegiality is a constitutive element in the structure of the Church.* That the Pope can only be first together with others and not someone who would make decisions in isolation as an absolute monarch and do everything himself."[102] To contrast that oft mistaken perception that Roman Catholics believe that ecclesial government consists of the pope as the only divinely instituted and essential organ, this twenty-first century pope clarifies that the cooperation of the whole episcopate, which itself is founded on divine institution, is just as intrinsic to the Church as the Roman headship is.

The Pentarchic theory of the eighth to ninth century Byzantines is entirely understandable and harmonious with the papal principle. And if the words of St. Theodore on the papacy are interpreted rightly, one can see that there is enough attested on behalf of St. Peter's primacy to make for the sort of supremacy and infallibility that the First Vatican Council deduced. We may then say, along with Fr. Louis Bouyer, that the Studite "is possibly the most remarkable example of a completely Eastern theologian who, nonetheless, makes his own practically all the theology of the Roman See that was developed in the West at the end of the patristic era."[103]

Aside from that, there is the glaring admission by St. Theodore of the second place of the patriarch of Constantinople. As the readers know, this goes backward to the fourth century council in Constantinople, whose third canon attempted to elevate the church of Constantinople to the primacy of second place, ahead of all the Eastern patriarchs and just below Rome. While Rome protested, and even annulled, against this canon, it cannot be denied that Rome, more or less, took on a tolerant attitude toward the basic goal of those canons (three and twenty-eight of Constantinople I and Chalcedon, respectively) beginning especially

[102] Pope Benedict XVI, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 71 (emphasis added).

[103] Louis Bouyer, *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 38n34.

in the mid-sixth century. Given the order of patriarchs listed in the twenty-first canon of the Council of Constantinople (860–870) and the fifth canon of the Council of Lateran (1215), it is unmistakable that Rome basically embraced the assignment of Constantinople that the twenty-eighth canon attempted to give, albeit Rome never endorsed the founding rationale of that canon, that is, that Rome's full primacy was due to its being the empire's capital.

It was stated earlier that Rome's patriarchate might be said to be from its original socio-political status, perhaps even utilized by the Apostles St. Peter and Paul, and that this is to be distinguished from its universal mission under the command of Christ to Peter. It was also said, following the canonical commentary of Fr. Richard Price, that the primacy won by the twenty-eighth canon was not equality with Rome's papal office as universal shepherd but rather a comparable primacy in the East (more on this below).[104] It is nonetheless difficult to deny that, while Constantinople's efforts to primacy were aimed at the wider privileges in its own surrounding regions of the East, she did end up arrogating certain universal prerogatives that were confusedly equalized with the universal primacy of "Elder Rome."[105]

Now, Rome herself never thought that it was in competition with Constantinople and accorded the latter as equally subject to the authority of the Apostolic See as any other patriarchate or church, as St. Gregory the Great made plain. Constantinople, however, seems to have had more liberty in its understanding of this. Rome, too, was not always consistent. Even so far as the interactions with the East by Popes St. Nicholas (858–867) and Leo IX (1049–1054), one can find popes still protesting the uncanonical, "self-aggrandizing" claims of Constantinople over Alexandria and Antioch.

Whatever might have been said during those interactions, Rome's toleration of the Constantinopolitan primacy is evidenced as far back as the sixth century, and it proves to be an anomaly for how she continued to understand the position of herself as the supreme See of Peter. Meanwhile the very canons upon which the elevation of Constantinople

[104] See Price's most recent commentary on the thirty-sixth canon of the Quinisext Council (691–692), where the Greeks reasserted the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon. It is quite clear he understands this to be a primacy in the East and not to be a denial, much less an equalization, with the Roman primacy; see Richard Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 117.

[105] John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 132.

rested insisted on a political cause to ecclesiastical primacy. The Byzantine theory that had gained much acceptance throughout the second millennium has it that both Rome and Constantinople owe both their primacies to the socio-political status of the imperial cities, and which, as Fr. Meyendorff understood, "excluded the 'Petrine' interpretation,"[106] is immensely inconsistent with the patristic testimony, and St. Theodore the Studite is a primacy witness proving this. Speaking to the divergence of thought on this issue, Fr. Joseph Ratzinger gets to the heart of the difference:

> Confusion of the original claim of the *sedes apostolica* with the administrative claim of the city that is a patriarchal see characterizes the tragedy of the dispute beginning between Constantinople and Rome. The concept of the patriarchate, which especially from the council of Chalcedon onward, was set in opposition to the Roman claim, and tried to contain it within the patriarchal way of thinking, misjudges the nature of this claim at its most profound level, since it is based on an entirely different principle. The patriarchal principle is post-Constantinian; its significance is administrative; and hence its practice is closely linked with political and geographical realities; in contrast with that, the Roman claim is understood on the basis of the originally theological theme of the *sedes apostolica*. To the same degree that [new Rome] (which could not consider calling itself "apostolic") blurred the old idea of the *sedes apostolica* in favor of the patriarchal concept, old Rome reinforced its references to the completely different origin and character of its own authority. . . . The concealing of the old theological idea of the *sedes apostolica*, which was after all from the outset a part of the church's understanding of herself, by the idea of the five patriarchates must be regarded as the real evil in the dispute between East and West.[107]

One more thing might be said to explain the reliance of both Sts. Nicephorus and Theodore on the Pentarchic organization. The context of their disputes was against the backdrop of the imperial policy in

[106] Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 100.

[107] Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate, and Apostolic Succession," 58–59.

Constantinople against the veneration of images, which was generally an illegal competition with the whole episcopate as the divinely established embassy of Jesus Christ for matters pertaining to God. The whole episcopate was represented by the five main patriarchates. Therefore, the appeal to the five patriarchs as the divine recipients of the keys of the kingdom, and therefore the final judgment on matters of dogma, is not so much to a proper theology of Pentarchy as it is just a device to show that the Church should govern its own affairs on doctrine rather than the state.

The iconoclast council of Hieria (754) was, by and large, an attempt of the emperor to enact his own dogma in the Church, and the glaring problem with it was that the major hierarchs of the Church were left without any participation. Now, if the backdrop is the Church's own constitutional government itself, irrespective of the imperial versus ecclesial opposition, then the *uniqueness of Rome* only comes into view when authors aim to distinguish Rome from the other patriarchs rather than distinguishing the Church from the empire. When and if a resolution cannot be reached between the Eastern patriarchs, "let both parties in the dispute send a deputation to Rome, 'and from thence let the *certainty* (literally, "security") *of faith* be received.'"[108] E. Symonds, free of bias to Catholicism, finds himself, perhaps reluctantly, admitting that St. Theodore had the following summarized view:

> In other words, the Pope is one of the five patriarchs, but he has a preponderating weight amongst them, and in an emergency his decision *may be taken as final.* Such is the view which Theodore holds about Rome in his less excited moments. It is also true, however, that he ascribes the exalted position of the Roman See to the *commission received from Christ.*[109]

The last prominent voice on papal primacy in the context of the iconoclastic controversy was the Syrian theologian Theodore Abū Qurrah (ca. 800), who defended the veneration of images against an Islamic backdrop. He was bishop of Harran, but some also claim he was a monk at the Monastery of Mar Saba.[110] While he is scarcely known, he is reported

[108] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 227.

[109] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 228. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 154–55.

[110] John C. Lamoreaux, "The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited," *Dumbarton Oaks*

to be "one of the most important apologists and defenders of icons in the history of Christianity"[111] against the Islamic and Jewish,[112] rather than Byzantine, context. As such, he should be well respected by the Eastern Orthodox. Being capable of reading and writing Arabic, Greek, and Syriac made for a great way to navigate ancient texts. His commentary on the Roman See and the ministry of St. Peter are, like St. Theodore's, quite explicit. He writes:

> You should understand that the *head of the Apostles* was Saint Peter. . . . As for Christ's words, "I have prayed for you, that you not lose your faith; but you, have compassion on your brethren, at that time, and *strengthen them*," we do not think that he meant Saint Peter himself. Rather, he meant nothing more than the *holders of the seat of Saint Peter, that is, Rome.* Just as when he said to the apostles, "I am with you always, *until the end of the age*," he did not mean just the apostles themselves, but also those who would be in charge of their seats and their flocks; *in the same way*, when he spoke his last words to Saint Peter, "Have compassion, at that time, and strengthen your brethren; and your faith will not be lost," he meant by this nothing other than the *holders of his seat.* . . . Indeed, everyone knows that the heretics attacked the Church only after the death of the Apostles—Paul of Samosata, Arius, Macedonius, Eunomius, Sabellius, Apollinaris, Origen, and others. If he meant by these words [i.e., strengthen your brethren] in the Gospel only Saint Peter, the Church would have been deprived of comfort and *would have had no one to deliver her from those heretics*, whose heresies are truly "the gates of hell," which Christ said would not overcome the Church. Accordingly, there is no doubt that he meant by these words nothing other than the *holders of the seat of Saint Peter, who have continually strengthened their brethren and will not cease to do so as long as this present age lasts.*[113]

---

*Papers* 56 (2002): 25–40, www.jstor.org/stable/1291852. Accessed June 25, 2020. Lamoreaux surveys the evidence but is himself skeptical.

[111] Adrian Agachi, "A Critical Presentation of the Work of Theodore Abu Qurrah in Defense of Icons," *Heythrop Journal*, issue 2 (2016): 259.

[112] Brubacker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 115–16.

[113] Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, trans. John C. Lamoreaux (Provo: Brigham

Similar to the Studite, Theodore Abū Qurrah understood the essential role of Peter's successor in ecumenical councils:

> Our sole goal is to build ourselves on the *foundation of Saint Peter*, he who *directed* the six holy councils. These councils were gathered by command of the Bishop of Rome,[114] the city of the world. Whoever sits on that city's throne is authorized by Christ to have compassion on the people of the Church, by summoning the ecumenical council, *and to strengthen them*, even as we have demonstrated in other places.[115]

Theodore Abū Qurrah is exemplifying the post-Byzantine idea, already having precedents in earlier centuries, where the Petrine protocol was the ultimate criterion for the ecumenicity of councils. The promise of Jesus Christ to St. Peter of a never-failing faith, parallel to the Lord's promise of divine assistance to the Apostles, was what St. Theodore based his conviction on concerning the papal seat in the Roman church. Fr. Klaus Schatz is entirely correct to say that the "eastern authors later acknowledged as representatives of orthodox faith recognize that controversies involving the whole Church, especially those having to do with matters of faith, *can only be definitively resolved in union with the Roman see, and not apart from it.*"[116] The testimonies of St. Stephen the Younger, St. Nicephorus, St. Theodore the Studite, and Theodore Abū Qurrah reviewed above confirm this observation.

---

Young University Press, 2005), 68–69 (emphasis added).

[114] Either he understands the decrees of councils to have depended upon papal ratification or this is leveraging historical revisions.

[115] Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, trans. Lamoreaux, 128 (emphasis added). Now, historically, the councils were always convened by the emperor, but the pope's cooperation and approval were always seen as uniquely necessary for the council's legitimate universal status. Another interesting observation is that Theodore counted six councils when, by this time, Nicaea (787) had already been completed. That could be explained by the slow process of reception of the seventh council, officially being accepted by Rome in the late ninth century.

[116] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 60.

*Chapter Twenty-Four*

# Photian Councils and the Papacy (859–880)

DESPITE BOTH PAPAL pronouncements and the Council of Nicaea (787) defending the veneration of icons, iconoclasm continued onward for decades. The error came to its greatest halt following the death of iconoclast emperor, Leo V "the Armenian," whose wife, Theodora, prepared the way as vice regent of the young Michael III (844–867) for a council to victoriously defend icons.[1] Icons were "for the last time solemnly reinstated, exiles were recalled or freed, [and] the most famous iconoclasts anathematized."[2] This is celebrated as *Orthodoxy Sunday* since 842. Sadly, following this, members of the church of Constantinople were left in a state of division between two factions. The first was the rigorist monastic community, principally led by the Studite monks, and the other was a more balanced conservative camp represented in the years 843–847 by St. Methodius, patriarch of Constantinople.

Due to the infestation of the priesthood by the second wave of iconoclasm, the patriarch St. Methodius had to enforce strict discipline in the East to snuff out any of its remnants. "Whoever had weakened [i.e., succumbed to iconoclasm] during the second period of iconoclasm

[1] Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 39.

[2] C. W. Previté-Orton, *The Later Roman Empire to the Twelfth Century*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 253.

was deposed, as was also everyone who had received orders from such a bishop."[3] With so many empty bishoprics and far too few candidates who carried the mentality of the Studites, "who were the most outspoken critics of his ecclesiastical policy,"[4] St. Methodius had to reverse course and use ἐπιείκεια (i.e., reasonableness), comparable to his predecessor St. Tarasios, in order to tolerate irregular replenishing of the clergy, the lax methods of which disappointed the Studite monks.[5] A *modus vivendi* proved impossible and a schism broke out. The perseverance of the Studites "obliged him [St. Methodius] to excommunicate them *en masse*."[6]

In an attempt to conciliate these two factions, Empress Theodora chose the monk St. Ignatius to ascend the throne of the church of Constantinople in 847, finding in him a less controversial figure since he had not been engaged in the foregoing conflicts.[7] However, it was St. Ignatius who, "in the darkest days of iconoclasm,"[8] strongly persevered in defense of the holy images and even founded a monastery on the island of Terbinthus.[9] Naturally, the Studite rigorists began to rally in defense of St. Ignatius.

Consequently, the factionalism was sure to stay when St. Ignatius passed a synodal condemnation of a certain Gregory Asbestas (844–880), an iconodule moderate, himself a "principal rival"[10] of St. Ignatius to the episcopal throne, and who had problems with the election.[11] Showing the superiority of the Roman primacy over Constantinople, Gregory lodged an appeal to the Apostolic See to have his case reviewed.[12] Two consecutive Popes, Leo IV and Benedict III, refused to settle the matter until St. Ignatius would send more evidence to present in Rome, which he never did.[13]

---

[3] Hans-Georg Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, eds., F. Kemf, Hans-Georg Beck, et al., trans. Anselm Biggs (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 174.

[4] Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 140.

[5] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 174.

[6] John J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee* (London: Penguin Books Ltd. and Random House, Inc., 1993), 63 (detail added).

[7] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 219.

[8] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 70–71.

[9] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 70–71.

[10] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 353.

[11] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22.

[12] Chadwick, *East and West*, 22.

[13] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 353.

When the young Emperor Michael III had arisen to fresh adulthood, at which point he would earn the name "Michael the Drunkard," his character and reputation "rapidly degenerated under the temptations of absolute power, with all its opportunities for license."[14] To join him in running the empire was his cooperative uncle named Bardas. He, too, was a man lacking in good morals and would turn out to team up against St. Ignatius. Although he was married, Bardas entered an illicit relationship with his daughter-in-law, and the scandal became known everywhere in Constantinople.[15] In one particular event that tested the patriarch, Bardas attempted to receive Holy Communion "on the Feast of Epiphany 858," and St. Ignatius rightfully "refused him the sacrament."[16] This was the next to the last straw, and Emperor Michael III arranged to have St. Ignatius replaced with a lay scholar, Photius, as the new occupant of the patriarchal throne.

It took only five days for him to go through all the right sacraments to become a bishop.[17] Under such circumstances, it should not come as a surprise that when Photius wrote to Rome to announce his election to the patriarchal throne, Pope St. Nicholas I (858–867) complained about the abrupt shift of events, in particular, "that Rome should have been notified before the removal of Ignatius since it had long been understood that 'without the consent of the Roman see and the Roman pontiff no final decision could be given in any controversy that arose.'"[18] At the same time, Emperor Michael III also wrote to the pope inviting him to Constantinople to participate in yet another ecumenical council to condemn the remnants of iconoclasm, but some scholars say it was more likely to confirm the status of Photius than anything else.

Pope St. Nicholas was an ardent traditionalist, possessed a keen awareness of the divine prerogatives bestowed upon him as St. Peter's successor, and would not permit canon law to be violated. For him, the pope of Rome was the "unquestioned superior of all patriarchs and metropolitans of East and West."[19] As inheriting the *Tu es Petrus* commission by Christ to St. Peter, the "Roman Church is divinely instituted," and

[14] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 353.

[15] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 72.

[16] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 72 (detail added).

[17] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 220.

[18] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 220, citation comes from "The Patriarch Photius: Father of Schism or Patron of Reunion," in *Photian and Byzantine Ecclesiastical Studies*, by Francis Dvornik (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974), 24.

[19] Sir Nicholas Cheetham, *A History of the Popes* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, Inc., 1982), 70.

has the "*principatus divinae potestatis*," and therefore "whatever occurs, occurs through the intervention of the Roman Church."[20]

As "head of Christendom," writes George Ostrogorsky, the Roman bishop "was entitled to the last word in disputes over ecclesiastical matters as much in the East *as in the West*."[21] According to Fr. Andrew Louth, despite the persistent claim to supreme and divine authority over the universal Church, "*There was nothing much new* about the claims Nicholas made for the papacy: he saw the pope as above the judgment of anyone else, however exalted, and affirmed that 'these privileges given to this holy Church by Christ, *not given by synods*, but only celebrated and venerated by them.'"[22] J. N. D. Kelly likewise states that the papal claims of Pope St. Nicholas were "inherited from Leo I, Gelasius I, and Gregory I," and that "For him the pope was God's representative on earth with authority over the whole church, synods serving merely as organs for carrying out his decisions."[23] In 865, Pope St. Nicholas said the following in a letter to Byzantine Emperor Michael III:

> Since, according to the canons, when there is a greater authority, the judgment of the inferiors must be brought to it to be annulled, or to be substantiated, certainly it is evident that the judgment of the Apostolic See, *of whose authority there is none greater*, is to be refused by no one. If indeed they wish the canon to be appealed to any part of the world; *from it*, however, *no one may be permitted to appeal*.[24]

[20] Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1955), 201.

[21] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 226 (emphasis added).

[22] Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West: The Church, AD 681–1071* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 168 (emphasis added).

[23] J. N. D. Kelly, "Nicholas I," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 107. See also German medievalist, Geoffrey Barraclough, who states: "Nicholas staked out no new claims for the papacy; but the firmness with which he asserted his right to intervene against unjust rulers made a lasting impression" (*The Medieval Papacy* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1968], 58). Likewise, Morrison asserts that Pope Nicholas and his successor, Hadrian II, were merely making the very same claims made by Leo and Gelasius in the fifth century (Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969], 222–34). See also Liliana Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross: Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy, 860s–880s* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1998), 167.

[24] Pope St. Nicholas, Epistle 8, "Proposueramus quidem," in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, eds. H. Denzinger, and K. Rahner, trans. R. J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 133.

And further:

> Furthermore it you have not heard us, *it remains for you to be with us of necessity*, such as our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded those to be considered, who disdained to hear the Church of God, especially since the privileges of the Roman Church, *built on Blessed Peter by the word of Christ*, deposited in the Church herself, observed in ancient times and celebrated by the sacred universal Synods, and venerated jointly by the entire Church, *can by no means be diminished*, by no means infringed upon, by no means changed; for the foundation which God has established, *no human effort has the power to destroy, and what God has determined, remains firm and strong.*[25]

He, of course, was not the first to make such claims since, as we saw above, Pope St. Gelasius I (492–496) made it even more abundantly clear. Speaking of the canons of the Council of Sardica (343), St. Nicholas's predecessor writes:

> And by this means the canons have instructed that this see is to sit in judgment on the entire church, *to pass to nobody's judgment*, nor *ever to be judged by its judgment*, and they have determined its verdict should never be undone, and ordered instead that *its decisions are to be followed.*[26]

A contemporary of the pope, Aeneas the bishop of Paris (d. 870), wrote a treatise against the Greeks (*Liber adversus Graecos*) which uttered what the Latins, by this time, began to argue forcefully for, and showed that such ideas were in the main by the ninth century at least. Needless to say, it was just another echo of the dogmatic epistle of St. Agatho read into the *Acts* of the Council of Constantinople (681). A glaring point is that he seemed to have forgotten about Honorius, which calls into question the whole claim:

---

[25] Pope St. Nicholas, Epistle 8, "Proposueramus quidem," in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, eds. Denzinger and Rahner, 133 (emphasis added).

[26] Gelasius, Letter 10, *Letters of Gelasius I (492–496): Micro-Manager and Pastor of the Church of Rome*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2014), 111 (emphasis added).

> It is a most lamentable truth that that very See which is now attempting to raise its head to the skies has, in place of bishops of the true faith, had heretical rulers stained with false doctrine. But by the guidance of God such a disgrace has never befallen the Roman See that an heresiarch should sit in the place which the Prince of the Apostles has adorned by his presence and consecrated by his blood, and to which with special care the Son of God has entrusted His sheep to be ruled. For it was said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." Can He not strengthen the faith of the one to whom by His own authority He gave His kingdom?—the one whom, in saluting the rock, He marked out as the foundation of His church.[27]

Turning back to the affairs of St. Ignatius against the newly installed Photius, it had been a matter of debate since that time over whether the former had voluntarily resigned under the request of the Emperor Michael III or was illegally forced out. According to Fr. Francis Dvornik, who wrote the single best monograph on this history entitled *The Photian Schism*, St. Ignatius was convinced to resign willingly.[28] However, Dr. William Carroll is correct to maintain a cautious answer even though landing very close to Dvornik.[29] In either case, Pope St. Nicholas responded to Michael III's invitation to an "ecumenical" council in Constantinople and proceeded to send legates to attend this iconodule *finale*, as if to put iconoclasm to end once and for all. The pope, however, insisted on two particular items: (1) the return of patriarchal oversight to the Balkans (Illyricum) and Sicily,[30] which Pope Hadrian I had demanded from Empress Irene in 787 and (2) a fresh opening of the case of St. Ignatius against Photius overseen by the Apostolic See. The pope was concerned over how Photius had been directly elevated to patriarch so quickly under imperial oversight.[31]

---

[27] Aeneas, *PL* 121.686–87, in *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 3, trans. Horace K. Mann (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1925), 68–69.

[28] Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 48.

[29] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 353.

[30] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 231.

[31] Aiden Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, second edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 230.

The pope's seeking to "involve himself"[32] in the case of St. Ignatius is a clear example of direct Roman intervention into the internal affairs of the Eastern church, and no less than that of the great See of Constantinople amidst the ruling Byzantine emperor. In other words, the pope was here exercising immediate jurisdiction, not requiring any permits from Constantinople, nor was an appeal lodged at Constantinople by someone accused.[33] Under the same concern for canonical maintenance in Constantinople, the pope refused to approve of Photius's election unless he was sure all was done in order. He wrote the following to Michael III:

> In order that fairness be observed in all things . . . [Ignatius] should appear before our legates and the General Council . . . so that they may inquire why he abandoned the flock entrusted to him. . . . For this purpose the legates will make a *careful inquiry into his deposition and his censure*, with a view to discovering whether the canons have been observed or not; then, when the matter has been reported to us, *we shall direct by our apostolic authority what is to be done*, so that your Church, daily shaken by these anxieties, may henceforth remain inviolate and unhurt.[34]

As Fr. Dvornik observes, St. Ignatius's retrial was commanded by the pope himself, reserving his own decision as the final word.[35] Evangelos Chrysos, Professor of Byzantine History at the University of Athens, describes accurately what the pope's message meant: "The message could

---

[32] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 171.

[33] This was, of course, not the first time. Nearly two hundred years prior to this, Pope St. Theodore (642–649), out of an "unprecedented expression of papal assertiveness towards the Church of Constantinople," called the East to account over what seemed like an uncanonical deposition of Pyrrhus to make space for Paul II. The pope then planned to do something almost equivalent to St. Nicholas here by sending legates to the East in order to lead a Synod to hold the patriarchate of Constantinople accountable for conducting depositions and replacements improperly; see Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 98. One can read reliable English translations of Theodore's letters to the East requiring the canonical investigation into the ordination of Paul to the episcopal throne of Constantinople in *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church: Letters from Late Antiquity*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 186–98.

[34] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Epistolae VI, 433–39, in *The Photian Schism*, by Dvornik, 75 (emphasis added).

[35] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 76.

not be more eloquent: the pope claims as a given and undisputable fact that he, as the successor of St. Peter, is the ecumenical leader who is entitled to exercise final judgment in all open questions."[36]

Now, when St. Nicholas's legates arrived in Constantinople, the emperor and Photius opposed the idea of reopening the case of Ignatius, since it had been fully concluded by the authority of a synod in Constantinople (859).[37] In response, the papal legates appealed to the canons of the Council of Sardica, which permitted the bishop of Rome to act as judge over the cases of any bishop:[38]

> We believe, Brethren, that the fundamental reason why we wish to re-examine this case is that the Fathers of the Council of Sardica decided that *the Bishop of Rome had the power to reopen the case of any bishop.*[39]

This shows that Rome understood the Sardican prerogative to be more expansive than what the canon strictly stated. To this the Byzantine bishops offered no objection, stating this right was entirely appropriate.[40] Interestingly, in the previous quotation from the pope, we can see that Rome understood this power to "reopen the case of any bishop" to be "apostolic," which obviously means he is referring to apostolic, rather than merely canonical, foundation. In one letter to Michael III, St. Nicholas claims to have the "authority" to call *any clergy to be examined.*[41] This was most likely a cause for irritation for many in the East. Even though the Photianist bishops thought the Synod of Constantinople 859 sufficed to close the case on St. Ignatius, they concluded that "in order . . . to honour the Holy Roman Church and the Holy Father Nicholas in the person of his representatives, *we are willing to allow* a second examination of the problems that concern him . . . to do homage to St. Peter and to the Holy Oecumenical Father Nicholas, *we all agree* to his case being *reconsidered*

[36] Evangelos Chrysos, "New Perceptions on Imperium and Sacerdotium in the Letters of Pope Nicholas III to Emperor Michael III," in *Constantinople réelle et imaginaire autour de l'œuvre de Gilbert Dagron* (Paris: Collège de France, 2018), 321.

[37] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 77.

[38] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 109.

[39] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 109.

[40] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 109.

[41] Hugo Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, trans. Leo Donald Davis, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 291.

*and tried again.*"[42] Thus, while the pope saw it as an immediate apostolic prerogative, at least some in Constantinople saw it as something they permitted rather than submitted to.

Michael III and Photius not only "yielded" to this but also changed the conditions: the papal legates would have to be the final judge in the matter right then and there instead of waiting for the pope to ultimately decide.[43] Pope St. Nicholas I, we find out, would not accept this. In any case, what is significant here is that "the Byzantine Church, by allowing Ignatius to be tried by the pope's representatives, granted to the See of Rome more than a mere right of appeal, since, as we have seen, *the ex-patriarch* [Ignatius] *had lodged no appeal with the Holy See.*"[44] Regardless of all of that, it seems safe to say that the Photianist bishops in Constantinople saw the allowance of a retrial as "*ex gratia*, not a right,"[45] and thus "in Byzantine eyes the status of the retrial was merely informal courtesy."[46] As we'll see, for Pope St. Nicholas, the matter was entirely that of law, and divine-apostolic law at that.

The ex-patriarch St. Ignatius showed up to the synod in Constantinople (861) dressed in official patriarchal clothing, which sent signals to everyone, and he was quickly required to replace it with "a simple monk's habit."[47] The synod turned out to reaffirm the deposition of St. Ignatius and thus affirm the legitimate enthronement of Photius. When news of this came back to Pope St. Nicholas, he "was not satisfied," and eventually "annulled their decision."[48] By the pope's own initiative, "he held a synod of his own in 863, condemning Photius[49] and reinstating Ignatius, an act which provoked a bitter letter from Michael III and a reply from the pope setting forth a high doctrine of the Roman primacy."[50] This is quite remarkable, since the pope here was coming to effect a disciplinary judgment binding on the East when there really had never been an appeal, which shows St. Nicholas understood he had the right to initiate such judgments. At this synod, the pope declared restoration of St. Ignatius

---

[42] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 78 (emphasis added).

[43] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 78.

[44] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 91 (emphasis added).

[45] Chadwick, *East and West*, 141.

[46] Chadwick, *East and West*, 141. I would disagree with Chadwick in that "Byzantine" has more than one view on the matter of Roman primacy. Certainly, his observation holds for the Photianist bishops in Constantinople.

[47] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 77.

[48] George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 120–21.

[49] Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *The Papacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 97.

[50] Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 231.

was based on "the authority given to us by God through blessed Peter by reason of the laws of the holy canons and papal constitutions."[51] For St. Nicholas, "the foundation of the Roman church by the Apostle Peter made Rome responsible for keeping the universal church free of heresy by the firmness of its own right faith."[52] In addition, the pope issued the following statement:

> If *anyone* condemns dogmas, mandates, interdicts, sanctions or decrees, promulgated by the one presiding in the Apostolic See, for the Catholic faith, for the correction of the faithful, for the emendation of criminals, either by an interdict of threatening or of future ills, *let him be anathema.*[53]

In 865, Michael III responded in a scathing letter, telling the pope that St. Ignatius's retrial was not out of strict obedience but an attempt to "be accommodating."[54] It was clear that Photius and the emperor "refused to admit the competence of Rome in such matters."[55] For the emperor, the real judgment on St. Ignatius "was no concern of the Roman See."[56] To this, the pope responded in what was "destined to be one of the most important documents in the evolution of the papacy,"[57] one which evidences for all scholars that St. Nicholas was a "vigorous defender of papal supremacy"[58] and thus playing from a different sheet of music than many of his contemporary Greeks. In his reply, Pope St. Nicholas states:

> If you do not listen to us, it remains that you be held by us as our Lord Jesus Christ enjoins us to hold those who refuse to hear the Church of God; especially since the privileges

[51] Nicholas, Epistle 46, in *PL* (*Patrologia Latina*) 119.845A; Eng. trans from *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, by E. Symonds, 233.

[52] Nicolai I, Papae Epistolae, in *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs: The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, by Bronwen Neil (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006), 48n55. This claim was not new as one can see them from the epistolary of St. Gelasius; see relevant section.

[53] Roman Council 863, in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, eds. Denzinger and Rahner, 132 (emphasis added).

[54] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 178.

[55] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1953), 303.

[56] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 104.

[57] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 105.

[58] H. W. Crocker III, *Triumph: The Power and the Glory of the Catholic Church—A 2,000-Year History* (Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 2001), 114.

> of the Roman Church confirmed in S. Peter *by the words of Christ*, ordained in the Church itself, observed from of old, proclaimed by the holy universal synods and ever venerated by the whole Church, *can by no means be diminished, infringed, or altered, since no effort of man has power to remove a foundation which God has laid, and what God has established stands firm and unshakeable.* . . . These privileges, then, were bestowed on this holy Church by Christ: they were *not* bestowed by the Synods, but were *merely* proclaimed and held in veneration by them.[59]

In the same letter, he continues:

> Nor should you judge the person of Blessed Peter's vicars but should judge their actions for the guidance of the Church and for your salvation. Do not judge them inferior to the scribes and pharisees, who sit in the chair of Moses and about whom the Lord said: "Observe and do what they say and not what they do" (Mt 23:3). Reflect then, emperor, if he told us to listen to those who sit in the chair of Moses, how much more should we obey those who sit in the chair of Peter?[60]

He continues:

> It is by these three principal Churches [Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch] that the solicitude of the Prince of the Apostle attends to the government of all the other Churches. It is necessary to remark besides, that neither the Council of Nicaea nor any other synod *has granted a single privilege to the Church of Rome.* What they know is that with Peter, this see had obtained the *plenitude of power* and had received the direction of all the sheep of Christ. This is what the blessed Bishop Boniface[61] attests, when he writes to all

[59] Pope Nicholas, To the Emperor Michael (865), in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., trans. Chris Maunder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 103–04 (emphasis added).

[60] Nicholas, To the Emperor Michael, Mansi 15.196, in *Church and State in Early Christianity*, by Rahner, 287.

[61] In 422, Pope St. Boniface I wrote the following to the Bishops of Thessaly: "The universal

> the Bishops in Thessaly. *The Synod of Nicaea was content to accord to the Church of Alexandria a privilege analogous to that which the Roman Church enjoyed.*[62]

As for whether Rome's jurisdiction is immediate or mediate, the pope stated:

> Thanks to God, since the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, we have *the power and the right to call* to us not only monks, but clerics from all dioceses for the advantage of the Church.[63]

Neither St. Ignatius nor Photius appealed to Rome before the pope intervened, and so this must be understood to be a prerogative that initiates a trial or retrial of bishops anywhere and which requires no legal permits other than what is intrinsic to the Petrine investment given by Christ. The Greeks at the imperial chancery in Constantinople saw it as a permission granted to the pope. This is quite possibly illustrative of the basic division that continues to divide Eastern Orthodox and Catholics today on the extent of jurisdiction proper to the papal office. And finally, St. Nicholas concluded:

> In short, We have already said, they are the privileges of Our Apostolic See, privileges *divinely given* to Peter *and transmitted to the Roman Church,* which the Church Universal celebrates and venerates, which inflame Us and do not allow Us to keep silence and remain indifferent.[64]

---

ordering of the Church at its birth took its origin from the office of blessed Peter, in which is found both its directing power and its supreme authority. From him as from a source, at the time when our religion was in the stage of growth, all churches received their common order. This much is shown by the injunctions of the Council of Nicaea, since it did not venture to make a decree in his regard, recognizing that nothing could be added to his dignity: in fact it knew that all had been assigned to him by the word of the Lord. So it is clear that this Church is to all Churches throughout the world as head is to the members, and that whoever separates himself from it becomes an exile from the Christian religion, since he ceases to belong to its fellowship" (Epistle XIV, *PL* 20.777, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles [London: SPCK, 1952], 230 [emphasis added]).

[62] S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (Mysterium Co., 2015), 328 (emphasis added). Interestingly, Pope St. Nicholas says Alexandria was given a primacy by canon, but Rome never did.

[63] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 328.

[64] Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 329 (emphasis added).

This was not a time to write hyperbolic praise for the Apostolic See. This is what was real to the pope, and he meant business. But even after writing this long defense of the papacy and the right of immediate universal jurisdiction against Michael III's critique, the pope was still willing to receive legates from Constantinople to have a fresh trial in Rome, at which place the situation would be finally settled. As can be expected, Photius responded to the pope, as well as to the "errors" of the Latins as he picked up on in the Western missionaries in the Balkan territory. This he did in a synod convened in Constantinople (867), at which the pope was "excommunicated," and condemned with other Latin "errors." Photius accused "the Western Church of heresy for admitting the *Filioque* clause to the creed, fasting on Saturdays, using milk, butter, and cheese in Lent, demanding priestly celibacy, and confining confirmation to the bishops."[65] Out of all of these things, Photius was clear about what he thought was most injurious:

> They have not only introduced the committing of such outrages, but now the *crown of all evils* is sprung up. Besides these offenses that have already been mentioned, they have attempted to *adulterate the sacred and holy creed*, which has been approved by the vote of all the ecumenical synods and has *unconquerable strength*, with spurious arguments, interpolated words, and rash exaggerations. They are preaching a novel doctrine: that the Holy Spirit proceeds not from the Father alone, *but from the Son as well.*[66]

The pope received notice of these accusations and turned to the bishops in the West, led by Hincmar of Rheims. The pope wrote:

> Inflamed with hate and envy against us, as we will specify later, they attempt to accuse us of heresy. . . . As regards the procession of the Holy Spirit—*who does not know* that distinguished men [saints and doctors], *especially among the Latins*, have written much about this matter? . . . Is it even strange that they should allege such things since they even

[65] Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. Robert T. Handy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 194.

[66] Photius, "Encyclical Letter to the Archepiscopal Sees of the East," in *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *From its beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation*, ed. William C. Placher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 90–92.

> glory in the assertion that when the emperors moved from Rome to Constantinople *the primacy of the Roman See also went to Constantinople, and with the royal dignitaries even the privileges of the Roman Church were transferred*?[67]

St. Nicholas was prevented from participating in this battle with the East as he died before he could, leaving his successor Pope Hadrian II to fill his spot. Meanwhile, if Photius and Michael III were ready to take further strikes against the pope and the West, they quickly altered that stance with the change of power in the imperial throne. Michael III was assassinated and replaced by Basil the Macedonian, and thus began the Macedonian Dynasty in Byzantium.[68] With Basil on the throne, there was a reversal in the program originally made with Photius. "The immediate sequel in Church matters was the deposition of Photius by Basil, his enemy, *and the restoration of Ignatius*."[69] However, since most of the high clergy in Constantinople were of the Photian faction, contra the Ignatian faction, the newly enthroned emperor deemed a new ecumenical council requisite to establish order and peace, especially with Rome.

Having read the papal correspondence with his predecessor, Basil submitted to the terms and conditions of Pope St. Nicholas and gave final authority on the matter to his successor Hadrian II.[70] The pope convened a synod in Rome in 869, and here the pope took a strong stance against the Photian uprising. At this synod, the pope no longer inquired into the situation in Constantinople. Rather, "Photius was solemnly condemned and deposed."[71] If Photius wanted to repent of his doings, he could have done so in the lay state.[72] The clergy who were ordained by Photius were considered deposed. Those bishops who had at once recognized St. Ignatius "but had later, understandably, recognized Photius were to be reinstated only when they had signed a *libellus satisfactionis* that was being drawn up in Rome."[73] Finally, the *Acts* of the pro-Photian Synod of Constantinople (867), at which Pope St. Nicholas was

---

[67] Nicholas, Letter to Archbishop Hincmar of Reims and the Bishops of the Western Empire, in *From its beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation*, ed. Placher, 92–93.

[68] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 357–358.

[69] Previté-Orton, *The Later Roman Empire to the Twelfth Century*, 255; Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 358 (emphasis added).

[70] Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, 140.

[71] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 182.

[72] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 182.

[73] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 182.

condemned, was burned.[74] The *libellus* of Hadrian II was simply a "slightly altered"[75] version of the Formula of Hormisdas (519), which acknowledges the Roman primacy and its divine protection in defining doctrine and condemning heretics.[76] The most important observation is that Photius was scheduled to be condemned unless he repented.

Hadrian II thereafter sent an Abbot Theognostos, a Byzantine defender of the pope who was also against Photius, to Constantinople "to make sure that Photius' deposition and the reinstallation of Ignatius as patriarch was properly handled."[77] An ecumenical council convened in 869 in Constantinople, at which all the pope's demands were met, albeit with some difficult opposition in the process. While the pope demanded the *libellus satisfactions* (Formula of St. Hormisdas) to be signed by all, after the papal legates collected the signatures and stored them away, the documents suddenly vanished, being stolen from the quarters of the papal legates.[78] Once the legates threatened to leave, "the documents were 'accidentally' found again!"[79] Catching on to this agenda, Anastasius Bibliothecarius (the Librarian), made copies of everything taking place at the synod to ensure the survival of the transactions. This came handy since when the papal legates were returning Rome, they were raided by a ship full of pirates, who carried a vested interest in the documents

[74] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 182.

[75] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 58.

[76] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 144–45. The text of the Formula of Hormisdas (Hadrian II) appears to be extensive in the Latin copy of the *Acts* of Constantinople 869–70 and the "Greek Acts," which are just a summary with excerpts, omits certain key parts not taken out in the Latin. According to Fr. Horace K. Mann (1859–1928), since the original Greek *Acts* are lost, the most reliable version of the original Greek comes from a copy made by Anastasius the Librarian during his visit to Constantinople and which has the full Formula. He translated the Greek copy into Latin, and this represents the *Acts* of the Council of Constantinople (869–870). Also according to Mann, in Anastasius's commentary on the council he stated clearly that the extended Formula of Hormisdas from Hadrian II was signed in full by all the Greeks, and that Emperor Basil, though receiving some protests from the Greek clerics, chose to submit to the Formula; see Mann, *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 3 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., LTD, 1906), 201n2 and 203n1. Dvornik notes there is a Greek abridgement (summary) of the *Acts* which stems from the widely known "anti-Photian Collection" documents, which omits parts of the Formula (see *Photian Schism*, 150n4, 221, 347, and 371). This summary has "excerpts" of the *Acts* of 869–870 in Greek, but truly the only full text of the *Acts* was the one translated by Anastasius; see Dvornik, "Patriarch Ignatius and Caesar Bardas," in *Photian and Byzantine Ecclesiastical Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974).

[77] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 370.

[78] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 58.

[79] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 58.

from the council going back to the pope.[80] Thankfully, Anastasius had a copy he brought back to Rome.[81] As a result, the *Acts* of the Council of Constantinople (869–870) did not survive in Greek but only in the Latin of Anastasius's translation.[82]

Regarding Photius, who was "bitterly condemned" for "having dared to judge a pope,"[83] not only was he condemned, but two additional elements of canon twenty-one of the council in 869–870 are worth mentioning. For the first time in a council with papal legates present, the order of patriarchs (*taxis of hierarchical sees*) was given with Rome as first and then Constantinople as second. That is very interesting, given the statements of Pope St. Nicholas I a couple years back.[84] And secondly, it stipulated the following in regard to Photius's action in condemning a reigning pope:

> But that no one compose or prepare any writings and words against the most holy Pope of older Rome under the pretext, as it were, of some evil crimes, *a thing which both Photius did recently, and Dioscorus long ago.*[85]

All in all, even granting the resistance given, this council represented a total Roman victory over the Photian affair. Clearly, the majority of the clergy in Constantinople were probably inwardly hostile to Rome's heavy hand (i.e., *libellus satisfactionis*) regardless of what lip service and handwriting they gave to past decrees extolling Roman authority. Even those who were not hostile, who depended on Rome, such as St. Ignatius himself, said considerable things about Rome, but might be found later acting contrary to that conviction. One example of this is from a statement on papal primacy St. Ignatius made himself:[86]

---

[80] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 58.

[81] Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 58.

[82] Chadwick, *East and West*, 167.

[83] Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 244.

[84] It also contrasts Pope Hadrian I who had no problem recognizing Constantinople as second, but who also agreed with Nicholas in denying that this entailed any sort of authority analogous to Rome, whose primacy was of divine origin.

[85] "Council of Constantinople IV (869–870)," in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, eds. Denzinger and Rahner, 138 (emphasis added).

[86] Later on we learn that St. Ignatius didn't want to give up the Bulgarian mission to Rome against the pope's express orders.

> "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And again, "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever thou shall be bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." *For such blessed words He did not circumscribe and define to the Prince of the Apostles alone but by a kind of chance, but through him he transmitted them to all who, after him, as his successors, were to be made chief pastors, and divine and sacred pontiffs of elder Rome.*[87]

You could not get a clearer detail of the origin of Roman primacy than that, and yet the Council of Constantinople (869–870) would not prove to be fully consistent with all the demands of the pope. When Anastasius had brought the Latin *Acts* and the copies of the *libelli* from the Eastern bishops, Pope Hadrian II expressed displeasure in the way in which his legates were treated at the council, and especially for Constantinople's refusal to give the mission of the Bulgars to the Latins, as the pope believed was necessary.[88] And while he confirmed the excommunication of Photius (the pope already decided this before Constantinople, 869), the above and other elements made the pope refuse to give papal pardon to those who signed the *libellus*.[89]

Meanwhile, it may have been the case that most of the clergy were not as willing to comply with the papal claims at the council sessions, but the claims of the pope and others were *nowhere formally condemned*. In fact, they were formally accepted however much one might want to say they denied it surreptitiously. Certainly, the Ignatian party was happy to see their man back on the patriarchal throne, but the simple fact of the matter was that the situation didn't materialize as the victory that the emperor expected. There were simply too many supporters of Photius for the Ignatius plan to bring lasting peace.

Basil then recalls Photius from banishment and employs a different

[87] Ignatius, Mansi 16.47, in *Vicars of Christ: A History of the Popes*, by Charles A. Coulombe (New York: Citadel Press Books, 2003), 156 (emphasis added); see also James Likoudis, "Eastern Orthodoxy: Primacy and Reunion," *American Ecclesiastical Review* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, Feb. 1966): 104–16n21, citing from *Le Schisme Byzantin*, by Rev. A. A. Martin Jugie (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1941), 90.

[88] J. B. Bury, *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, *The Eastern Roman Empire (717–1453)*, eds. J. R. Tanner, C. W. Previtè-Orton, and Z. N. Brooke (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1923), 53.

[89] Bury, *Cambridge Medieval History*, 53.

strategy that involved restoring him back to the status of patriarch. At that time, this appeared the only feasible option to bring order back to the church of Constantinople. How the Apostolic See would resolve this would fall to Hadrian II's successor John VIII, who sent legates to Constantinople in 877 for a settlement on the new situation. During this elapsed time, St. Ignatius had died just after both recognizing the lawful throne to Photius and reconciling with him. So now there were two contradictory realities. Photius had just been deposed, condemned, and excommunicated by an ecumenical council in 869, yet he now happily reigned over the church of Constantinople. That made for a canonical nightmare. The decrees of Constantinople and the numerous *libelli* signed did not just magically disappear from the record. Official acts were in law, and the force of them continued to stand regardless of Photius suiting up in the patriarchal regalia. Thus, letters went back out to the Apostolic See and, without making it entirely clear that Photius was already fully exonerated by the emperor and the clergy in Constantinople, they were successful in getting the pope to merge with their plan of making the recognition of Photius both official and canonical.

Pope John VIII found it opportune to normalize Photius *while at the same time preserve the dignity and authority of St. Peter's throne.* There had been a clear victory for the papacy at Constantinople (869), but the upcoming council in Constantinople (879-880) would require a different posture on the part of the pope. John VIII convened a synod in Rome to discuss the new situation in Constantinople and made the following stipulations, which were sent to the East in transcripts to be read aloud at the new council. Those which are relevant are here listed:[90]

1. Appealing to the supreme power of binding and loosing given to St. Peter by the God of heaven in Jesus Christ, the Pope claimed, by virtue of his succession to St. Peter's throne, *it would be by his authority* that the disciplinary sentence on Photius would loosen the former bond made at Council in Constantinople (869).

2. As such, the clergy ordained by Photius would be validated, and the clergy of both the Ignatian and Photian factions reconciled, all on the condition that Photius

[90] Johan Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union: A Theological Analysis of the Photian Synod of 879–880* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1975), 39.

*publicly seek mercy for his former actions.* This was to ensure that prelates cannot flippantly disregard the authority of Rome.

3. All Greek missionary work from Constantinople should cease and be returned to the responsibility of the Apostolic See.

Ultimately, the council was successful, as the title of Fr. Johan Meijer's book hints,[91] and unity between Rome and Constantinople was amazingly restored. Photius was reinstated by the Eastern clergy under the supervision of John VIII's legates, and the emperor promised to return Bulgaria to Rome. Ironically, for some reason the Western consensus was that Photius, acting like the Martin Luther[92] of the East, died outside of communion with the Church. This has been hotly challenged by Fr. Francis Dvornik's magisterial work *The Photian Schism.* What is peculiar is that this council was not ultimately numbered as ecumenical by the West or East hereafter.[93] Not only that, but the Council of Constantinople (869), which was *most likely* annulled by Pope John VIII,[94] was not immediately counted as ecumenical but in later centuries began to be numbered as the Eighth Ecumenical Council.[95] In terms

[91] Meijer's book is called *A Successful Council of Union.*

[92] Fr. Adrian Fortescue says: "Photius was, far more than any other one man, responsible for the schism; he is the Luther of the Orthodox Church" (*The Eastern Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. [London: Catholic Truth Society, 1908], 134 [emphasis added]).

[93] In two important documents by Popes Marinus II (r. 942–946) and Leo IX (r. 1049–1054), both of them count only seven ecumenical councils; see Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 314–15. The document of Leo IX was his synodical letter to Patriarch Peter of Antioch and so serves as a statement of faith. It is no surprise, therefore, that even Cardinal Humbert's sentence against Michael Cerularius only mentions seven councils; see Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 387.

[94] See Fr. Venance Grumel (1890–1967) in his review of Fr. Dvornik in *Revue des études byzantines* 10 (1952), 282–83. I obtained a translation of the French from Dr. Peter Gilbert, "Grumel on Dvornik," Feb. 2011, *De unione ecclesiarum: musings on Church and State*, https://bekkos.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/grumel-on-dvornik/?fbclid=IwAR33lH7AUzJQlC5SQjO91J2wf9u5zMYKz9UyoVmrPweyv4qlluIuA799ekk. Fr. Grumel supposes that since the Council of 869 dealt mainly with the condemnation of Photius, it was not expected to be enlisted as a main council when Photius had been just released from this condemnation by John VIII in 879. But between "this and an abrogation there is quite a stretch."

[95] Trevor Jalland gives a precise summary of the origins. The first time we have a record of the Council of 869 entering into the category of "universal," with regard to its canons, is with Anselm of Lucca's book of canon law (which he gave as a title head, *universa octava synodus*); see Jalland, *The Church and Papacy*, 388. Cardinal Deusdedit (ca. 1100) cites the canons of Constantinople 869 but "shows a certain hesitation about its oecumenicity" (Jalland, *The Church and Papacy*, 388). The first to show no hesitation is St. Ivo of Chatres (Jalland, *The*

of dogmatic value, neither council gives any treatment of doctrine nor introduces any new theology. Nevertheless, there are several portions of the *Acts* which bear direct relation to the subject of papal primacy and both the Western and Eastern perception of it, and to this my attention will turn.

Interestingly, both the Greek and Latin version of the Acts contain bold proclamations by John VIII of Rome's universal jurisdiction based on the divinely instituted *Tu es Petrus* investiture. All texts from the pope's Latin were left as they were transmitted and accepted by the council also in the Greek.[96] Photius explicitly kept the passages of John's letters which "based papal power on Christ's commission to 'Peter, Prince of the Apostles . . . whom the Lord placed at the head of all the churches.'"[97] This is noteworthy since some Orthodox might point out that the council held in 869, which contained unmistakable claims to a divinely instituted papal supremacy, was annulled by the council held in 879. Consequently, it might be argued, the new council in 879 is cleansed of such erroneous content. Yet, the papal claims in each council are qualitatively equal. Given that the same claims of papal power were made and accepted by both councils, Fr. John Chapman rightly concludes that "the one council is as good as the other, for both afford plenty of proofs of the supremacy of the Roman Pontiffs over Constantinople, and of the Byzantine tradition on the subject."[98]

What papal claims were read aloud at the council? The following letter of Pope John VIII was read aloud, in the Greek, during the council:

> After receiving the keys of the kingdom of Heaven from the first great Pontiff Jesus Christ *through the intermediary of the first of the Apostles*, Peter, to whom He said: I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, *this apostolic throne has the power to bind and loose all*, and in the words of Jeremiah, *to uproot and to plant*. For this very

*Church and Papacy*, 388). Even then, as late as Florence, it could still be a matter of debate (Jalland, *The Church and Papacy*, 388).

[96] Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 44; Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 182–86; Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 111–12; Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 229; Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 41, 48, 78, 81–83.

[97] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 229.

[98] Fr. John Chapman, O.S.B., *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 82n1.

> reason, we also, by the authority of the Prince of the Apostles, Peter, announce to you with our entire Holy Church. . . . Accept this man [Photius] without any hesitation.[99]

Dvornik makes an important observation regarding this reference to Jeremiah for the power to uproot and plant. That was not in the original Latin of John VIII's pen.[100] It was added by Photius at the council. More than a decade earlier, this metaphor from Jeremiah on the power of uprooting had been used by Pope St. Nicholas himself to describe the power of Emperor Michael III.[101] In the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet records the commission that God has given him in the vocation of the office of Prophet: "See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, *to root out and to pull down*, to destroy and to throw down, *to build and to plant*."[102] To *uproot, root out*, and *pull down* meant to remove weeds or unwanted plants, and to "build" and "plant" would be to restore good plants. Medieval popes would go on to use this "Injunction of Jeremiah"[103] to reference their authority. Far into the future, Pope St. Pius V (1566–1572) would utilize this injunction of Jeremiah in his description of papal authority in his Bull excommunicating Queen Elizabeth (1570).[104]

---

[99] Mansi 17.400, in *The Photian Schism*, by Dvornik, 183–84 (emphasis added).

[100] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 112; see also Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 82.

[101] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 122n29; Dvornik's citation provided is *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Epistolae, VI, 509 (*PL* 109.1042).

[102] Jer 1:10 *NKJV* (emphasis added). Interestingly enough, in St. John Chrysostom's commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, on the "Tu es Petrus" (Matt 16) passage, St. John compares the adornments that God places upon the prophet Jeremiah with those Christ adorned on St. Peter; see John Chrysostom, Homily 54, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 10, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. George Prevost, rev. M. B. Riddle (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200154.htm.

[103] Kriston R. Rennie, "'Uproot and Destroy, Build and Plant': Legatine Authority under Pope Gregory VII," *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007), 167.

[104] "He that reigns in the highest, to whom has been given all power in heaven and earth, entrusted the government of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (outside which there is no salvation) to one man alone on the earth, namely to Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and to Peter's successor, the Roman Pontiff, in fullness of power [*potestatis plenitude*]. This one man he set up as chief over all nations and all kingdoms, to pluck up, destroy, scatter, dispose, plant and build" (Bull of Pius V, "Regnans in Excelsis," in *Documents of the Christian Church*, trans. Chris Maunder, 267–68 (emphasis added); also see Pope Pius V, "Regnens in Excelsis," *Papal Encylicals Online* (1540), https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius05/p5regnans.htm.

How and why Photius and the Byzantine court inserted this imagery into John VIII's letter is seriously puzzling. In any case, it would be the Latin West who reaped the benefits of this. The papal claims were so well attested to at this 879 council that Latin medieval canonists drew from the *Acts* in order to reinforce papal authority in later centuries. Cardinal Deusdedit (ca. 1100), friend of Pope St. Gregory VII,[105] and St. Ivo of Chartres (1040–1115) both made collected references to the papal claims from the Council of Constantinople (879).[106] Why were these claims to papal jurisdiction left in the *Acts* by the Byzantines? I documented above how, while the Greeks most likely did not tamper with Hadrian's letter to Nicaea (787), later copies had a great many omissions from the papal claims in the original. It is all the more astonishing that, in the midst of the tension of this time, "Photius nowhere interfered with essential passages expressing John VIII's views on the primacy of the Roman see—*a point of capital importance*."[107] To the question of whether Photius denied the doctrine of papal jurisdiction and primacy, Jalland states that the idea "is proved to be untrue by his own attitude in submitting to papal judgments."[108]

Some additional commentary on this council is appropriate. It should be stated at the outset of additional statements that the source material dating to Photian events varies drastically from extremists who represented the Ignatian party to extremists who defended the Photian party. Scholars have had to navigate the literature to try to piece together what is *more likely* to have been the story, rather than having a clear singular retelling that leaves no room for dispute. In other words, the conflicting literature between those who supported St. Ignatius or Photius does not paint a neat and coherent story if all their claims are to stick on the canvas. Therefore, scholars have had to clean off what is unreliable or least likely and keep what they interpret to be a more reasonable retelling. When one reads the studies done by Fr. Dvornik (who often seems set out to paint Photius in a better light, sometimes at great cost)[109] and

[105] J. P. Kirsch, s.v. "Cardinal Deusdedit," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04760c.htm.

[106] Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, 112; Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 45–46; Dvornik, Photian Schism, 186–87.

[107] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 186 (emphasis added).

[108] Jalland, *The Church and Papacy*, 387.

[109] I agree with Fr. Grumel's review of Dvornik's *The Photian Schism*: "While recognizing that Photius is not as sinister as he has been depicted in the past, one may well ask oneself whether the author has not gone too far in the contrary direction. The dissertation maintains throughout a tone of special pleading which, in the end, harms the case it means to

Fr. Meijer, it becomes abundantly evident that the perception of the Photian controversy as held in Rome, ever since the pontificate of Pope St. Nicholas I, was somewhat inaccurate. Scholars have come to see that the pro-Ignatian clergy, mainly from the Studite monastics, as we saw, were responsible for deluding Rome into anti-Photian sentiments. As a result, there was a disparity between the mentality that went into the papal preparations for this upcoming council to reinstate Photius versus what the papal legates learned to have been the case when they interacted with the clergy in Constantinople.[110]

As a result of this, the original letters sent by the pope had two versions: (1) the Latin version of the Register of John VIII and (2) the Greek version that was put into the *Acts* of the Council.[111] Due to the disparity between the papal perception of Photian events versus what the legates came to learn by their interaction with Constantinople in 879, "the pope's letters could not be read to the Fathers of the council as they stood."[112] This explains why there is a difference between some parts of the Latin version and the Greek version, and such revisions were done with the consent of the papal legates.[113]

Despite the Greeks and the papal legates changing some of the pope's wording, the claims of the divine and Petrine institution of universal papal jurisdiction were included in the Greek version.[114] The changes made from John VIII's original Latin were not for the advantage of removing papal claims but rather to edit from the pope's letter the false claims, which the pope himself could not have been aware of since he was absent from the goings on in the East.

What of the annulment of the Council of Constantinople (869)? Originally, Pope John VIII had only wanted to annul the judgment of that synod (and the one held in Rome prior to it) against Photius, since "the

demonstrate. When one finds that, on every occasion, in every doubtful case, and even in those cases where evidence to the contrary is not wholly lacking, the interpretation given is the one that favors the hero, without any weight placed on the opposite scale, one is left with the impression of a unilateral vision of events, an impression that the proper middle viewpoint has not yet been found" (translated by Dr. Peter Gilbert on his website *De union Ecclesiarum*, Feb. 11, 2011, https://bekkos.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/grumel-on-dvornik/.

[110] Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 46–56, 65–73; Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 181.

[111] Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 40.

[112] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 181. The Greek bishops understood that John VIII required a number of items that could not be reasonably upheld in light of the quasi-unanimity of the Fathers on the source or origin of the hypostasis of Christ our God.

[113] Pope John VIII recognized the differences and changes between his original letters and what went into the *Acts*; see Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 206 and 209.

[114] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 182; Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 48–49.

See of Saint Peter, key bearer of the heavenly Kingdom, has the power to loose *whatever Popes have bound*, if it considers it necessary."[115] The pope's letter to Emperor Basil is replete with the claims to possess the power of St. Peter to absolve and reinstate Photius:

> Inspired by these divine words and possessing *full power* to succor all Christians, as far as we can without incurring blame or damnation—a *power* whose fame has reached the confines of the world—and following the example of our predecessors, *we have acknowledged Photius.*[116]

Thus, if any of the Ignatian clergy had signed the original *libellus satisfactionis* of Pope Hadrian II against Photius, they could rest assured that their oath could not render them guilty of accepting Photius since the power of St. Peter to loose what was once bound had been effected. This power to loosen what was bound, writes Fr. Meijer, "was a welcome argument against this synod [Constantinople, 869], *and Photius himself made use of it when attempting to have decisions of 869 annulled.*"[117] This act showed, at least in John VIII's mind, that the annulment of the sentence of Constantinople (869) depended upon papal authority, and the Council of 879 itself, without the authority of St. Peter's keys, could not have annulled it.[118] It should also be noted that the Council of 879–880 condemned any and all word-additions to the creed, a clear hint toward the *Filioque*, but it "*said nothing about the theological implications of the Filioque.*"[119] Pope John VIII agreed to the restriction of alterations or additions to the creed since "it was impolitic to change the Creed," and "he saw no theological objection to the word itself."[120] The creed, as it was codified at the Council of Constantinople (381) and locked by the Council of Chalcedon (451), should be free of all changes. That was the Roman policy even at this time. Although, during the session where the Council of 879 issued a disciplinary anathema on any and all who add to the creed, the papal legates qualified this by agreeing that the creed should be locked but then added that this status of being locked should remain

[115] Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 83 (emphasis added).
[116] Mansi 17.452, in *The Photian Schism*, by Dvornik, 185 (emphasis added).
[117] Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 83 (emphasis added).
[118] Chadwick, *East and West*, 174.
[119] Clarence Gallagher, *Church Law and Church Order in Rome and Byzantium: A Comparative Study* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 82 (emphasis added).
[120] Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 30.

only on the condition that no new heresy requires a modification to it.[121] That qualification presumed, in the presence of the Greek bishops, that the Church has the authority to unlock the creed, if she so needs to, and proceed to add to it.

It has been thought by some that this entailed a condemnation of the doctrine of the *Filioque*.[122] However, even Eastern Orthodox historian Aristeides Papadakis admits that the Greeks did not give substantial treatment to the doctrine of the *Filioque* until the Synod of Blachernae (1285) which for him was "the only reaction of the Byzantine Church to the *Filioque*."[123] Though the Eastern Byzantines had lacked "any conciliar formulation on the subject until that time," it was only at this council in 1285, claims Papadakis, that "*the doctrine was finally discussed and dogmatically settled*."[124] For Fr. Meijer, the bishops did not have the intention of condemning the doctrine behind the *Filioque* clause,[125] which is quite telling given how emphatic Photius himself was against the conception of the *Filioque*.[126] Rather, the council gave the profession of faith (i.e., the creed) with "an appendix which anathematized any addition to the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, *without discussing the dogmatic question of the Filioque*."[127] Concerning the cooperation of the legates, J. N. D. Kelly states that the "Romans could assent because *there was no discussion of the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit*."[128] Fr. Dvornik puts it succinctly: "Nowhere was the doctrine of the *Filioque* questioned: the only objection was to the addition of the formula to the Symbol."[129] The German Byzantinist scholar Hans-Georg Beck states that, at the Council

[121] Chadwick, *East and West*, 176.

[122] Fr. George Dion Dragas, "The Eighth Ecumenical Council: Constantinople IV (879/880) and the Condemnation of the Filioque Addition and Doctrine," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44.1–4 (1999): 357–69.

[123] Aristeides Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus 1283–1289* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 3.

[124] Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium*, 3 (emphasis added). See also Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 241. Symonds understands that, at the council, "Photius did not . . . deny the doctrine implied by the Filioque."

[125] Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union*, 136.

[126] Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 92.

[127] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 186 (emphasis added). On this question, George Every wrote: "In a final session all additions to the creed were condemned, without any particular mention of the Filioque" (*The Byzantine Patriarchate*, 134). It is very difficult to formally condemn a doctrine not even mentioned.

[128] J. N. D. Kelly, "John VIII," in *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 111 (emphasis added).

[129] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 196.

of 879, the bishops "completely excluded the dogmatic question and contented itself with prohibiting additions to the Creed."[130] If the council Fathers sought to condemn the *Filioque* doctrine, they would have specified it, named its adherents, and then proceeded to issue an anathema on the specific names. This did not occur at Constantinople (879–880). Given that the *Filioque* addition to the creed was so important to many Greeks in the East, the fact that such a matter was important without mentioning it as a theological error[131] worthy of anathema is extremely thought-provoking.

Pope John VIII ratified the decrees of Constantinople upon his legates returning. However, in both his letters to Photius and the Emperor Basil, he expressed dissatisfaction over the changes that were made to his original letters, though he ultimately acquiesced and confirmed the council.[132] Though, in both these letters, he finished with the following strange words:

> We approve what has been mercifully done in Constantinople by the synodal decree of your[133] reinstatement and if perchance at the same synod our legates have acted *against apostolic instructions*, neither do we approve their action nor do we attribute any value to it.[134]

This is a bit puzzling as there were clear divergences of the legates and Photius from the original instructions handed to them by the pope. One of those stipulations was to have Photius publicly plead for mercy to the council for his past wrongdoing, which Photius did not do, and he even wrote in a letter to the pope that he left such repentance for those who were guilty of wrongdoing. And yet the pope still accepted the synodal decree of Photius's reinstatement. It leaves the interpreter with few options other than a clear contradiction. Fr. Dvornik is probably correct

[130] Beck, "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," 189. In fact, Beck thinks that the council didn't even absolutely condemn additions to the creed, but only when the change did not occur during an occasion to combat heresy and also if the change did not contain "false words."

[131] Chadwick, *East and West*, 179.

[132] J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 85.

[133] In the letter to Basil, in place of "your" is "of the very reverend Patriarch Photius' reinstatement" (Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 211).

[134] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Epistole VII, 227, 228, in *The Photian Schism*, by Dvornik, 206 (emphasis added).

in saying that John VIII was trying to make a hedge of protection against anything that may have been misapprehended that might violate the Roman primacy.[135] Perhaps he came to recognize that, as Hans-Georg Beck observed, "Photius could not be managed, and once Photius showed himself inclined to recognize the authority of the Holy See—*and he often did so during the synod*—he saw no compelling reason to reject him."[136] Still, the letter of the pope was not the clearest act of ratifying the full council, and one is justified in arguing whether the pope gave in to anything more than what he originally instructed his legates.

In modern discussions with Orthodox, it is often brought up that the Latins never did maintain the Council of Constantinople (879) as numbered with the ecumenical councils, and that, contrary to its annulment in the same year, the West later brought back the Council of Constantinople (869) and registered it as the Eighth Ecumenical Council. It is true that Rome did not recognize the 869 council, nor did she require it as binding upon the Greeks. As recorded above, neither Latins nor the Greeks were firmly dedicated to either of these councils (that is, both 869 and 879) as registered ecumenical councils, and it is mainly due to the fact that there were no dogmatic pronouncements on the faith.

In a thirteenth century Dominican treatise, it was said that the Council of 869 was not ecumenical on account of its exclusively disciplinary focus.[137] Even John Bekkos (1225–1297), one time patriarch of Constantinople, denied that any dogmatic question was raised at the council.[138] Therefore, if no dogmatic questions were raised and settled at either of these councils, the Catholic Church's upholding of the Council of 879, only later to dismiss it and add in the Council of 869, *is not a condition in which the Catholic Church can be accused of doctrinal contradiction*. It was already conceded that St. Peter's keys, wielded by his successor, can annul disciplinary councils, even those styled as "ecumenical" (869). On the other hand, many modern scholars of the West recognize that it is time for the Catholic Church to relook at this historic

[135] Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 208.

[136] "The Byzantine Church in the Age of Photius," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History*, eds. Jedin and Dolan, 187 (emphasis added). William Carroll states, "But since there had been no direct defiance of Papal authority such as Photius had been guilty of in the past, Pope John VIII, so hard beset, decided that he was not in a position to challenge what had been done" (*The Building of Christendom*, 382).

[137] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 249–50.

[138] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 243. Although, Michael of Anchialos, a predecessor of Bekkos, tried to squeeze a doctrinal implication out of it with regards to the Filioque; (Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 241).

adjustment to determine whether it was accurate or not.[139] As to Rome's agreement to the *horos* of the Council of 879, it has been often pointed out that Rome's later inclusion of *Filioque* into the creed in 1014 was a violation of a binding ecumenical rule and thereby demonstrates the excommunicated and schismatic status of the Latin West. The premise here is that the *horos* of 879 is a binding law over the heads of the popes of Rome indefinitely, at least until another ecumenical council decides it is permissible to alter the creed. Something first should be said about the binding authority of this *horos*.

It had been long argued that the bishop of Rome, by the authority invested in him, could change the creed of the Church. A Benedictine monk, Ratramnus (786–860) of the Corbie Abbey, who was "one of the most important ecclesiastical authors of the ninth century,"[140] argued in his *Contra Graecorum opposita* that the "Roman bishop has the same right to add to the Creed as does an ecumenical council itself."[141] Before him, St. Paulinus II of Aquileia (735–802) argued that the creed could be changed and held that the smaller Western councils were justified in adding *Filioque* because it was consistent with the faith of the Holy Fathers.[142] The *Filioque* doctrine was certainly upheld by many Western saints, such as St. Augustine,[143] St. Leo the Great,[144] St. Gregory the Great,[145] St. Paulinus II,[146] and Pope St. Leo III,[147] but the actual word-addition was strongly forbidden by Rome until the beginning of the second millennium (1014). When Rome did interpolate the creed with *Filioque*, it was not intended to force the Byzantine East to insert it into the creed for their usage.[148]

According to Siecienski, "Augustine's writings in the West took on the role of a 'second canon,' with his *De Trinitate* viewed as the criterion

[139] Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 43.

[140] Michael Ott, s.v. "Ratramnus," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12659c.htm.

[141] Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 242; Oliver Herbel, "Ratramnus of Corbie, Paulinus of Aquileia, and Aeneas of Paris as Sources for Bonaventure's 'Filioque' Arguments in the 'Sentences,'" *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007): 87–105, www.jstor.org/stable/41975422.

[142] Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 238.

[143] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63.

[144] Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 64.

[145] Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 70–71.

[146] Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 93.

[147] Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 96–99.

[148] Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 59.

*sine qua non* for orthodox trinitarian theology."[149] It was this fact that ultimately compelled some of the Greek delegates at the Council of Florence (1439) to accept that the *Filioque* doctrine was orthodox. Therefore, while unilateral papal authority would be what, as the Latins claimed, justified the Roman interpolation of *Filioque* into the creed, and while this did alter the mandate against reform at the Council of 879, the Greek bishops had given an explicit acceptance of the Roman *Filioque* at the Council of Lyons (1274), albeit not without afterwards rejecting it and the Council of Florence (1439), only for them to annul these councils for themselves afterwards. In both cases, the Greeks were captured under legal pen to give a Roman profession of faith, but later it was abrogated.

The way forward requires some analysis of the situation. According to Florence, the Orthodox would have to agree that the *Filioque* was orthodox and usable by the Roman rite, and they could live at peace knowing the patristic *per filium* (through the son) teaching. For Eastern Orthodox, Catholics would have to take *Filioque* out of the creed and formally condemn it as heretical. But if the Catholic Church did this latter thing, then it would also be, at once, a swift anathema to the Augustinian triadology of the whole West and would call into question the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Western sphere of Christ's Bride. This is the dangerous conclusion that moved the Greek delegate Bessarion to subscribe to the *Filioque* doctrine at Florence. On the other hand, if the Orthodox could admit the *Filioque* doctrine, as explained by the Latins, was wholly orthodox, that its recitation in the creed is canonically permissible for the Roman rite, and that the Oriental *per filium* is equivalent in substance to the Latin *Filioque*, then and only then do we have a full inclusion of the catholicity and glorious illumination of both Western and Eastern Fathers.[150]

[149] Siecienski, The Filioque, 63.

[150] Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: A Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 307. Concerning the Council of Florence, Herrin wrote: "Agreement was reached on the grounds that all saints are inspired by the same Holy Spirit, whether they are western or eastern, and their faith must be the same in substance even if it is expressed differently in Latin and Greek." See also Fr. Joseph Gill, "The Sincerity of Bessarion the Unionist." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 26.2 (October 1975): 386.

*Chapter Twenty-Five*

# Rome versus Constantinople (1054)

From 880, it would be approximately 175 years until what would become the symbolic year of the great rupture between East and West, 1054. For several reasons, this symbolism is far from reflecting the real moment of a final break between the two sides. Almost every historian recognizes this and has to preface that point when lecturing on the subject. The other patriarchal sees of the East, such as Antioch, did not remove the pope's name from their diptychs, and it was Peter, who occupied the Antiochene patriarchal throne, who sought to put pressure on the famous Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople, to consider putting away his long list of reasons to break from the Apostolic See. What the reader may find a bit surprising is that this chapter will be relatively short since the cause of the friction between the Latins and Greeks in 1054 had far less to do with the papacy than with the *Filioque* and disciplinary practices. But a brief explanation of what transpired should suffice, as well as some content on how both churches understood the new chapter they freshly came to by the eleventh century. As is well known, political factors come to the fore when setting the context of the schism. However, this briefing will stick to the disciplinary and the theological, since this was of the utmost importance to all the characters involved.

Michael Cerularius (1043–1058) was a man strongly committed to the prestige of the See of Constantinople and found himself taking initiative

in several moves that brought him into conflict with Rome. The social background consisted of the Norman invasion of Southern Italy, which came with enforcements toward Byzantine churches in that region to conform to Latin customs.[1] The most important aspect of this transition was focused on the fact that Latin churches had used unleavened bread in Holy Mass rather than leavened bread like the churches of the East, except for the Armenian Orthodox.[2] Ever "since the ninth century, primarily (we presume) under the influence of Old Testament texts, the use of unleavened bread as the celebration of the eucharist in the West became the general custom."[3] So important was this issue that one famous patriarch, John of Antioch (1089–1100), wrote that the "*principal cause of the division* between" Greeks and Latins "*is the matter of azymes. . . .* The matter of *azymes* involves in summary form the *whole question of true piety*."[4]

When Michael Cerularius came to hear that Greek churches in Southern Italy were being forbidden to continue their Greek usages in liturgy, he responded by ordering "the Latin churches at Constantinople to adopt Greek usages; and on their refusal, he closed them."[5] In particular, the Latin churches in Constantinople were required to use "leavened bread for the Mass."[6] A famous critic of the Latins was Leo of Ohrid, who argued that the churches that used unleavened bread for Holy Mass were "Judaizing."[7] Prompted by Cerularius,[8] Leo of Ohrid wrote a famous letter to John, archbishop of Trani in Apulia (Southern Italy), "arguing that unleavened bread (*azyma* in Greek) was not properly bread and that, therefore, *the Latin Eucharist was not a genuine sacrament*."[9]

---

[1] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 58.

[2] Christine Chaillot, "The Ancient Oriental Churches," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, eds. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York: Oxford University, 2006), 150. Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 40–41.

[3] Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and Some Reflections*, second ed., trans. John Halliburton (Oxford University Press, 1979), 110.

[4] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 177 (emphasis added).

[5] Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 41.

[6] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 479.

[7] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 246.

[8] Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 41.

[9] Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West: The Church, AD 681–1071* (Crestwood, NY: St.

Indeed, aside from being Jewish, it was an "invalid" sacrament as well![10] Contrary to what modern students of history might think, during this time "the principal point of disagreement with the Latins was not papal primacy or even the *filioque*, but rather the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist."[11] That is right. The launch of the 1054 division was based on this Azymist controversy. One striking portion of Leo's letter states:

> Straighten yourself out! Correct your errors! Abandon unleavened bread and observance of the Sabbath to the Jews, use of meat with blood in it to the pagans and the barbarians, in order to put yourself in accord with us in true orthodoxy![12]

This letter was then to be passed to "all the Bishops of the Franks, to the monks and people and to the most venerable Pope himself."[13] This letter would serve to ignite thick tensions between the papacy and the East. As expected, the pope received the letter which condemned the Latin Eucharist[14] and quickly prepared to respond. Commissioned to reply to what appeared to be a gross accusation against the Latin rite was a Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida, a staunch papalist who wrote in defense of the infallibility of the pope and Latin customs against Leo of Ohrid and Cerularius. This reply came in two separate documents, the first being a direct response to the attack on the Roman church and the second a defense of Latin ritual.[15] A close look at the contents of the first letter is warranted. He wrote:

> You are said to have publicly condemned the Apostolic and Latin Church, without either a hearing or a conviction. And the chief reason for this condemnation, which displays an unexampled presumption and an unbelievable effrontery, is

---

Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 307 (emphasis added).

[10] John Laux, *Church History: A Complete History of the Catholic Church to the Present Day* (Charlotte: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1989), 295.

[11] John Erickson, "Leavened and Unleavened: Some Theological Implications of the Schism of 1054," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 14 (1970): 134, quoted in *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, by Siecienski, 247.

[12] E. Amann, "Michel Cérulaire," cited in *The Building of Christendom*, by Carroll, 479.

[13] John J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee* (London: Penguin Books Ltd. and Random House, Inc., 1993), 358.

[14] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 358.

[15] Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 42.

> that the Latin Church dares to celebrate the commemoration of the Lord's passion with unleavened bread. What an unguarded accusation is this of yours, what an evil piece of arrogance! . . . In prejudging the case of the highest See, the see on which no judgment may be passed by any man, you have received the anathema from all the Fathers of the all the venerable Councils. . . . As a hinge remaining unmoved, opens and shuts a door, *so Peter and his successors have an unfettered jurisdiction over the whole Church since no one ought to interfere with their position, because the highest See is judged by none.*[16]

Elsewhere in the letter is a defense of Roman indefectibility:

> The Holy Church has been built upon a rock, that is, *upon Christ*, and *upon Peter* or Cephas. . . . It was built because it never was to be conquered by the gates of hell, that is, by *heretical opinions which lead the unwary to destruction.* This is the promise of Truth itself who is the cause of all that is true: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). The same Son of God bears witness that by his prayers *he obtained the fulfillment of this promise* from the Father, *for he said to Peter*, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you . . . but I have prayed for thee, *that thy faith may not fail*" (Luke 22:31f.). Will there be anyone, then, so foolish as to dare think that the prayer of the person whose will is power to do, can be devoid of effect? Is it not by the *See of the Prince of the Apostles*, namely, by this *Roman Church*, both by this same Peter *and by his successors*, that all the inventions of heretics stand condemned, exposed, and overcome? Are not the hearts of the brethren strengthened in the faith of Peter which has not failed thus far *and will not fail till the end of time*?[17]

[16] From the letter *In terra pax hominibus* from the Roman church to Michael Cerularius, Mansi, xix. 638 B ff, in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., trans. Chris Maunder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 105–06 (emphasis added).

[17] Humbert, Letter to Michael Cerularius, AD 1053, in *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*, eds. Clarkson, Edwards, Kelly, and Welch (Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973), 71–72 (emphasis added).

The pope knew about and signed off on the above claims,[18] but scholars question whether the letter ever reached Cerularius in Constantinople.[19] The substance of these claims had been part of the papal consciousness for a long time, as the foregoing commentary has shown. According to Walter Ullmann, "the programme of the papacy as a governing institution had been maturing since the mid-fifth century."[20] St. Leo IX, then, was only echoing the ancients of the West to the royal chambers of Constantinople, as had been done plenty of times before.

Meanwhile, after attempting to defend against the Normans, the pope "was taken prisoner and held in Benevento."[21] The Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX had sent a more peaceful letter of communication which reached the pope and Humbert, resulting in higher hopes of resolution.[22] Besides, there was much to be gained by a strong union with the Greeks against the Normans.[23] The Patriarch Cerularius even wrote to the pope that he would insert his name into the diptychs in Constantinople if Rome would do likewise for himself. The pope responded and claimed that it was out of place, since any church out of communion with Rome was in the wrong.[24] Such a self-perception of Constantinople as almost equal with Rome was gaining major traction by this time, as they "had grown increasingly more accustomed to consider the pope merely as the patriarch of the West."[25] In an effort to bring about peace between the Greeks and the West, Cardinal Humbert and two others were sent to Constantinople,[26] and the plan was to deliver a more conciliatory letter to the patriarch from the pope, leaving the prior one (authored by Cerularius) out of the picture.[27]

After greeting both emperor and patriarch, the relations went sour very quickly. The papal legates delivered a letter from the pope, and this

[18] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 479–80.

[19] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 255; Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 249.

[20] Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 128.

[21] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 306.

[22] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 480.

[23] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 360.

[24] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 249.

[25] Ludwig Hertling, *A History of the Catholic Church* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1956), 178.

[26] Hans-Georg Beck, "The Byzantine Church from 886 to 1054," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History*, eds. Jedin and Dolan, 415.

[27] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 360.

sent Cerularius into a reactionary mode. Disliking the manner in which he and the other legates were treated, Humbert published the original letter that he had written while in Italy against the accusations of Cerularius and Leo of Ohrid, leaving all in Constantinople to read it.[28] Cerularius, now enraged, was unwilling to have a debate with the papal legates because the issue of the *Filioque* required an ecumenical council,[29] and this finally pushed Humbert to the end of his patience, wherefrom he, on July 16, 1054, accompanied with the other legates, famously "strode into the Great Church of St Sophia and up to the high altar, on which they formally laid their solemn Bull of Excommunication."[30]

In this Bull, Cardinal Humbert accused the Greeks in Constantinople of simony, castration of clerics, rebaptizing Latins, claiming the Greek eucharist was the only valid one, accepting married priests, excommunicating clerics with shaved faces as was custom in Rome, for deleting the *Filioque* from the creed, and condemning the use of unleavened bread in Holy Mass.[31] Technically, the excommunication was only toward Michael Cerularius "and his followers," rather than Constantinople as a whole church. Toward the end, it reads:

> The holy Roman, first, and Apostolic See, toward which, as toward the head, belongs the special solicitude of all churches, for the sake of peace and benefit of the church, has deigned to appoint us legates to this city . . . by the authority of the undivided and Holy Trinity and that of the Apostolic See . . . whatever our most reverend lord the Pope has denounced in Michael and his followers, unless they repent, we declare to be anathematized.[32]

While there may have been some merit to these accusations, even if on a small scale, Steven Runciman expresses amazement at how "a man of Humbert's learning could have penned so lamentable a manifesto."[33] Michael Cerularius responded in kind by condemning the papal legates but ended up distinguishing them from the pope and the church of

[28] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 360.

[29] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 256.

[30] Norwich, *Byzantium: The Apogee*, 362.

[31] Robert E. Van Voorst, *Readings in Christianity* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), 122–23.

[32] Migne, *Patrologiae Graeca*, vol. 120 (Paris: Migne, 1890), cols. 836–44, cited in *Readings in Christianity*, by Van Voorst, 123.

[33] Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 48.

Rome, with which cordial reunification was still hoped for, despite continuing to leave the pope's name absent from the diptychs.[34] Cerularius accused the Latins of the *Filioque*, priestly celibacy, *azymes* (unleavened bread), failure to venerate icons, clean-shaven priests, and other items.[35] When there had been so many other matters of more substance to debate between the Latin and Greeks, it is just as unfortunate as it is strange that it ended up being on liturgical items that the split began to take official formation.

It is often said that 1054 was the year the Greeks and Latins definitively split and made the Eastern and Western schism. However, some details are here completely overlooked. In the first place, Pope Sergius IV (1009–1012) sent his *synodikon* to Sergius II, patriarch of Constantinople, which included the *Filioque*. As a result, it is said that the patriarch of Constantinople removed the pope's name from the diptychs of Divine Liturgy.[36] Therefore the pope's name had not been recited in Constantinople's liturgy since 1009,[37] and Michael Cerularius had not restored it even in his own day. In fact, Cerularius attempted to inform Peter III (1052–1056), patriarch of Antioch, that the Roman patriarch had not been recited in the Divine Services since Pope Vigilius in the sixth century. Peter responded and "deplored his inflammatory tone, and argued that all his allegations were either matters of no importance or misunderstandings."[38]

Peter and other Eastern sees, on the contrary, were happily in communion with Rome and urged Ceruarlius to peace and patience, noting that a full investigation, and perhaps an ecumenical council, could resolve the disputes.[39] Despite the popularity of the 1054 controversy between patriarch Cerularius and Pope St. Leo IX's papal legates, this event would not cause the "final breach"[40] of Latin or Byzantine memory. When Pope Urban II (1088–1099) launched the Crusades to aid the Greeks, he brought up the issue of the name of the pope not being in the diptychs of Constantinople, to which the patriarch then, Nicholas III (1084–1111), replied that he had no evidence of a formal schism or any evidence to

[34] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 259.

[35] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 310.

[36] George Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204* (London: SPCK, 1947), 149.

[37] Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 50.

[38] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 310.

[39] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 253.

[40] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1953), 574.

support the absence of the pope's name.[41] The feud between Humbert and the patriarch was truly only a local phenomenon.

It should be asked just how did the West diverge from the East in this usage of unleavened bread in the Eucharist? One thing seems clear enough, and that is that the Last Supper of Christ the Lord with the Apostles was an authentic Passover meal, in which unleavened bread would have been used.[42] Therefore, the use of unleavened bread in Holy Mass could hardly be a sign of heresy. The Byzantine arguments which attempted to say that the Latin use of unleavened bread proved Judaizing errors or that the absence of leaven showed a symbol of death were so weak that even Fr. John Meyendorff admitted such weakness requires no demonstration, and the "best theologians of Byzantium" restricted the cause for schism to only the issue of the *Filioque*.[43] These arguments were framed especially by Leo of Ohrid and Nicetas Stethatos (1005–1090) against the Latins.[44]

The truth of matter is that the theological merit of the Byzantine argument on the use of unleavened bread "has not stood the test of time as an ecclesiastical *casus belli* between East and West."[45] The late Fr. Alexander Schmemann and Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev both admit that this issue of the *azymes* in Holy Mass is to be distinguished from the subject of the faith as "purely ritual,"[46] not relating to the "essence of the faith,"[47] "secondary,"[48] and "external."[49] Metropolitan Timothy Ware, taking from the example of St. Theophylact (whose feast is Dec 31 in the Orthodox Church), agrees that each church, both the Latins and the Greeks,

[41] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 316–17.

[42] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 41–66; Reginald Maxwell Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist* (Oxford: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1913), 3; Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, 178; Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes*, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 6–30; Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 2015), 315–75.

[43] Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 94–95.

[44] Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 95.

[45] Aiden Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, second edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 279.

[46] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 115.

[47] Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1*, 115.

[48] Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, 248.

[49] Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, 248.

should be free to use either leavened or unleavened bread.[50] According to Fr. Andrew Louth, this Azymite controversy "could, on quiet reflection, be peaceably settled"[51] using the model of the debate (circa 1149) between Nicetas of Nicomedia and Anselm of Havelberg. There, the Eastern Orthodox Nicetas conceded to the Latin Anselm in that unleavened bread should be used, but that ultimately, since it was not a matter essential to the apostolic faith, either usage is permissible.[52]

Therefore, in today's effort to reunite the churches of East and West, the Latin use of unleavened bread should pose no obstacle. Even so, the first time there was a definitive reference made to the use of unleavened bread for the Holy Eucharist was in English scholar Alcuin of York (735–804).[53] In the mid-ninth century, St. Rabanus Maurus (780–856), archbishop of Mainz, made very clear statements on the Latin usage of unleavened bread.[54] According to Michael S. Driscoll, Professor at the University of Notre Dame and member of the executive council of *Societas Liturgica*, the "Carolingian *renovatio* introduced unleavened bread pressed with irons into the form of wafers."[55] Fr. Andrew Louth summarizes the most likely origins:

> The introduction of unleavened bread may have been primarily practical: it is less likely to form wayward crumbs; it is easier to reserve for the sick (leavened bread, if not baked to a biscuit, goes mouldy). The use of unleavened bread may indeed have been intended to mark off Eucharistic bread from ordinary bread as something special.[56]

Of course, there were many who defended it based on our Lord's using unleavened bread at the Last Supper.[57] And such a point was correct, but

---

[50] Timothy Ware, "Eastern Christendom," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 147.

[51] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 317.

[52] Ambrose Cristie and Carol Neil, eds., *Anselm of Havelberg, Anticimenon: On the Unity of the Faith and the Controversies with the Greeks*, trans. Ambrose Cristie, OPraem, and Carol Neel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 199–202.

[53] Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist*, 18–19; Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 314.

[54] Adrian Fortescue, *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914), 302; Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist*, 19–20.

[55] Michael S. Driscoll, "The Conversion of the Nations," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, eds. Wainwright and Tucker, 193.

[56] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 314.

[57] Fortescue, *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy*.

it is also true that it was the constant practice until the ninth century for the Latin West also to use ordinary bread, which would have been leavened bread. In any case, the Latins were officially intent to permit the use of either unleavened or leavened bread as valid in the celebration of the Lord's holy Body. So Pope St. Leo IX had Dominic,[58] patriarch of Venice, write the following to Peter III of Antioch:

> Because we know that the sacred mixture of fermented bread is accepted and lawfully used by the most holy and orthodox Fathers of the Eastern Churches we understand both customs faithfully and we confirm both with a spiritual explanation.[59]

Thankfully, by the time of the Council of Florence (1439), the Greeks were willing to recognize the Latin custom as acceptable.[60] As later centuries came, the real dogmatic differences between the Orthodox East and Catholic West have been reduced to the *Filioque* and *papal primacy*, the latter being the most crucial in the debate. From 1054 going forward, there is no schism between East and West as if one event caused a definitive breach. Rather it was a gradual exclusion of the pope's name from Eastern diptychs, and this was certainly due to the constant news of the Latin usage of unleavened bread for Holy Mass, the recitation and theology of the *Filioque*, and the claims to papal supremacy. In fact, even this estrangement had already been materially there for centuries prior.

As the Russian Byzantinist George Ostrogorsky said, "Misunderstandings between the two ecclesiastical centres were all too common and *no one was to guess that the quarrel of 1054 was of greater significance than earlier disputes*, or that it marks a schism which was never again to be healed."[61] In this dispute between Cardinal Humbert and Michael Cerularius, we can see that the Latin understanding of ecclesiology and the Greek understanding were already in their mature tension, and it was only a matter of time before people started to point out the obvious. The schism became clearer and "in the heart" of the Eastern Greeks

[58] Fr. Adrian Fortescue, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1908), 189.

[59] Fortescue, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, 303.

[60] Joseph Gill, S.J., *The Council of Florence* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 272 and 275; Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 71.

[61] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 337.

after the sack of Constantinople in 1204, and with the subsequent Latin Empire being established in the Byzantine East.[62] Nevertheless, there were instances of Greeks and Latins working in harmony, and even intercommunion in some cases, as far as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[63] Even so, the repudiation of the union Council of Florence (1439) marks a definitive breach of communion, even if there were a few areas where Greek and Latin cooperation persisted thereafter.[64]

[62] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 146.

[63] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 146. See also Timothy Ware, "Orthodox and Catholics in the seventeenth century: schism or intercommunion?" in *Schism, Heresy, and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker (Cambridge at the University Press, 1972): 259–276. Ware noted how in 1967, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church permitted communion to both Russian Old Believers and Roman Catholics on request; see Timothy Ware, "Communion and Intercommunion," in *Primary Readings on the Eucharist*, ed. Thomas J. Fisch (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 200. However, this was extremely controversial, and Moscow has revoked its decision (*Primary Readings on the Eucharist*, 200n35).

[64] Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate*, 191–93.

*Chapter Twenty-Six*

# Comprehensive Historical Analysis

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH claims that the papacy is a divinely revealed doctrine, "its own prerogative always being observed and preserved *both in general Councils and in other places*."[1] We have surveyed the early Church and the ecumenical councils in order to see if this prerogative is duly testified and sufficiently proven. The Council of Lyons (1274), prefiguring *Pastor Aeternus* (1870) by almost six hundred years, gives a detailed summary of papal authority in the following description:

> Also this same holy Roman Church holds the highest and complete primacy and spiritual power over the universal Catholic Church which she truly and humbly recognizes herself to have received with fullness of power from the Lord Himself in Blessed Peter, the chief or head of the Apostles whose successor is the Roman Pontiff. And just as to defend the truth of Faith she is held before all other things, so if any questions shall arise regarding faith they ought to be defined by her judgment. . . . In her, moreover, such a plentitude of power rests that she receives the other churches to a share of her solicitude, of which many

1 "Profession of Faith of Michael Palaeologus," Mansi 24.70, in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, eds. Denzinger, H., and K. Rahner, trans. R. J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 185.

> patriarchal churches the same Roman Church has honored in a special way by different privileges.[2]

The Council of Florence (1439), which also prefigures *Pastor Aeternus* by about 430 years, gives quite the same description,[3] but adds that this authority was evidenced by the "acts of the Ecumenical Council." If we take into serious consideration all that has been explored from the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the councils, can we really say that the sources sufficiently prove the papacy? We must say that there is no doubt that the basic content of this decree is rooted in principles both implicitly and explicitly held by the data surveyed in this book. However, we also saw that right alongside affirmations of the divinely institute papal primacy, there was resistance and even flat-out rejection of both its theory and its exercise. And so, while historical theologians may have exaggerated the *modus vivendi* between two distinct ecclesiologies throughout the first millennium, it is undeniable that there was already tension within the same patristic Church. That tension eventually grew to produce the great schism in due time. Nevertheless, both Catholics and Orthodox rest the transmission of the apostolic deposit of faith through the same Church Fathers, and both Eastern and Western Fathers are equally revered by both communions.

Elementary Patrology makes clear that the Fathers and bishops of the Church were not always on the same page with the subject of the Roman primacy. While the Catholic might seek to leverage the high papalist commentaries of Pope St. Leo or St. Agatho, the Catholic is still obliged to look at the anti-papalist commentaries of men such as St. Firmilian or the North African synod against interference by the bishops of Rome. Unfortunately, what we have here is a clear divergence between eminent voices from the patristic era, where some measure of the history lends great weight to the papal (Catholic) theory, and then another measure

---

[2] "Profession of Faith of Michael Palaeologus," Mansi 24.70, in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, eds. Denzinger and Rahner, 185 (emphasis added).

[3] "The Primacy of the Roman Pontiff," in *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, eds. J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1975), 215 (emphasis added): "Likewise, we define that the holy apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff have the primacy over the whole world, and that the same Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him, in the person of St. Peter, was given by our Lord Jesus Christ the full power of feeding, ruling, and governing the whole Church as is also contained in the acts of the ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons."

from the same history lends weight to the conciliar or sobornost (Orthodox) theory. The sheer fact of this is not a debilitating one to either side, as the Greeks at the Council of Florence may have thought even within the apostolic times.

If one were to take a time machine and travel back into the 40s, that person would be able to report many divergences from significant voices. But it must not be thought that a tense disagreement obliterates all hope in discerning which side was right and true. Just because there are two sides to an argument does not mean that both sides must be wrong. The problem is that the history between Eastern and Western Christianity has an enormous amount of material to support each side, and anyone should hesitate before claiming a "winner."

What is the inquirer to do? Must the debate on the papacy in the patristic era be left at a stalemate? Is there some explanatory weight that tips the scales one way or the other? I think there is, even if it amounts to an eyelash-weight in favor of the Catholic side. This explanatory weight will be articulated in six points below, each based upon the evidence laid down in previous chapters, and which makes up a sort of comprehensive analysis of the all the data.

1. **Throughout the first millennium, saints and doctors of the Church from both East and West testify to Rome's immaculate faithfulness to the Apostolic Tradition such that her doctrine was supremely reliable. Therefore, historic Rome's position on papal authority throughout the first millennium should be favored over and against any alternative theories.**

Given that the Orthodox even admit that historic Rome was the principal defender of the faith and the model of orthodoxy for the universal Church, then historic Rome's tradition on the nature, origin, and extent of her primacy must be, at least, chiefly credible. And yet, it is evident that the historic Roman tradition is emphatically representative of the descriptions of papal authority accepted by the Catholic Church. Orthodox theologian Fr. Laurent Cleenewerck (OCA) has the following to say concerning the history between East and West:

> Papal primacy certainly has a precedent—if a controversial one—in the earliest days of Christianity. . . . As early as 256,

> we find Rome invoking Peter's succession to claims a *primacy of jurisdiction over the "universal Church."*[4]

He says elsewhere that the papal claims are rooted as far as the second century:

> Victor obviously claimed superior authority, probably from St. Peter, and decided—or at least "attempted" to excommunicate a whole group of churches because they followed a different tradition and refused to conform. One could therefore argue that *the Great Schism started with Victor, continued with Stephen and remained underground until the ninth century!*[5]

On the claims of jurisdiction and infallibility, Fr. Cleenerwerck states that we find "St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Theodore the Studite expressing the view that Rome was in [a] unique sense 'the Chair of Peter' *that would never fall into heresy.*"[6] Continuing from there, he goes on:

> Thus, Rome's idea of having divine *primacy and inerrancy* acquired historical support and even found sporadic acceptance in the East, notably between 500 and 800. . . . Since the times of Stephen, the Roman Church has consistently taught that her bishop is the successor of Peter in a unique sense and that he holds by *divine right a primacy of power over the universal Church.* In other words, Rome made no secret that her ecclesiology and concept of primacy were different from that of the East, as we have seen in the reaction of Pope Leo to the canons of Chalcedon. *This was expressed consistently and unambiguously by a number of Popes commemorated as saints in the Orthodox Church, including such luminaries as Agatho and Hadrian. As we have seen, this ecclesiology was accepted by a number of Eastern Saints.* Because Rome was a stronghold of stability and orthodoxy

[4] Laurent Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* (Washington, DC: Euclid University Press, 2007), 161.

[5] Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body*, 155–56 (emphasis added). A startling but sober admission in light of the evidence.

[6] Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body*, 213 (italics added).

> for over eight hundred years, this idea had at least the status of acceptable or accepted opinion. At the same time, this does not imply that the theory of Roman supremacy ever found full recognition in the East. . . . *[I]t simply means that the East never overtly condemned Rome for teaching this view.* In the final analysis, it might be said that Photius was the first Eastern patriarch to fully grasp the implications that Rome's ecclesiology had become a claim to absolute divine authority.[7]

The observations here made by Fr. Cleenerwerck match up very closely to my findings and that of other theologians already cited in previous chapters. To expand upon one quotation from Fr. Alexander Schmemann, we see the same observation made by Fr. Cleenerwerck:

> The theory of the "power" (*potestas*) of the Roman primate was openly proclaimed in Rome in the *era of the ecumenical councils*. . . . Rome always clearly followed its own policy, but the East, *without ever really accepted it*, until the ninth century never once expressed its nonacceptance or rejection of it in any clear way. They always tried to conceal disagreement in diffuse and ambiguous phrases. When Catholic scholars now assert, on the basis of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, that the East recognized the primacy of Rome at that time but later rejected it, it is rather difficult to answer the charge on the basis of formal historical evidence, since one may in fact conclude from the history of those two councils *that the Greek bishops admitted the special prerogatives of the Roman bishop.*[8]

Right here, Fr. Schmemann basically concedes to the core content of the decree of Lyons (1274) on the Roman primacy of universal power (*potestas*) over the universal church when it stated that this truth is "openly proclaimed" during the ecumenical councils. Aside from that, his description of two "mutually exclusive" ecclesiologies, what Fr. Laurent Cleenerwerck called a difference in "*ecclesiological and theological DNA*,"[9]

---

[7] Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body*, 213 (emphasis added).

[8] Alexander Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 240 (emphasis added).

[9] Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body*, 161 (emphasis added).

follows lockstep the many intellectual historians, from both Orthodox and Catholic mindsets, surveyed in chapter 2. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev echoes these two Orthodox scholars in admitting the "doctrine of primacy was repeatedly advanced in the east by papal legates, *without encountering any serious objections from eastern theologians until Patriarch Photius.*"[10] Even Photius, as shown in chapter 22, witnessed explicit papal claims at the Council of Constantinople (879) and did not demand any investigation or a heresy trial on the matter. However, we have also seen instances in history where there were serious objections to exercise of papal power that leave the Orthodox with available ammunition against the exclusivity of the papal claims, both in and out of councils as well as in formal interaction between popes and other bishops.

This has the potential to leave the student of history wondering if either the Orthodox or Catholic side even has a chance to prove itself over the other. If the councils and Fathers of the Church find themselves split, perhaps down the middle, over the papal claims (some for it, some against it), then it would seem any preference would not be founded on the evidence itself. There is, I think, a way to recover from this historical paralysis. A good place to start is to look at the two sides and contemplate their credibility. In other words, was it Rome's historic position or was it the resistance that gained the acceptance of the Church at large? While he was still Lutheran,[11] the great historian Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan made the following remarks about the church of Rome in the first millennium:

> Rome had been on the side that emerged victorious from one controversy after another, and eventually it became clear that *the side which Rome chose was the one that would emerge victorious.* . . . Those who argued against the Latin case were not entirely bereft of documentation for their counterclaim that Rome had not been absolutely right every single time, *but the weight of the evidence for the*

[10] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church,* trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 109 (emphasis added).

[11] Interestingly enough, he would convert from Lutheranism to Eastern Orthodoxy at the age of seventy-five in 1998. His colleague and Catholic historian Dr. Robert Louis Wilken gave a brief description of this conversion in "Jaroslav Pelikan and the Road to Orthodoxy," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74.1 (2010): 93–103. Also see Wilken, "Jaroslav Pelikan, Doctor Ecclesiae," First Things, Aug 2006, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/08/jaroslav-pelikan-doctor-ecclesiae.

> *astonishingly high average accumulated by the see of Peter sometimes proved to be all but overwhelming.*[12]

Furthermore:

> The churches of the Greek East, too, *owed a special allegiance to Rome.* As far as the church of Constantinople was concerned, [quoting Gregory the Great] "who would doubt that it has been made subject to the apostolic see," that is, of course, *to Rome*? By hailing the authority of Leo, the fathers at Chalcedon gave witness to the orthodoxy of Rome. One see after another had capitulated in this or that controversy with heresy. *Constantinople* had given rise to several heretics during the fourth and fifth centuries, notably Nestorius and Macedonius, *and the other sees* had also been known to stray from the true faith occasionally. *But Rome had a special position.* The bishop of Rome had the right by his own authority to annul the acts of a synod. In fact, when there was talk of a council to settle controversies, Gregory [the Great] asserted the principle that "without the authority and the consent of the apostolic see, none of the matters transacted [by a council] have any binding force." . . . Although he held tenaciously to the authority of tradition and the teachings of the fathers, *the see of Rome had a special assignment to defend that tradition.* As another bishop wrote to Gregory, "I know what a grave matter it is to transgress the limits that have been set for us by the fathers. . . . Therefore I take my refuge in the bosom and the lap of your most sacred Roman church."[13]

There is a testimony in nearly every century of the first millennium to the remarkable orthodoxy and radical trustworthiness of the church of Rome. In the second century, St. Irenaeus (180) said concerning the Apostolic Tradition at Rome: "For it is a matter of necessity that *every*

[12] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 150 (emphasis added).

[13] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 354–55 (emphasis added).

*Church should agree with this Church*, on account of its preeminent authority."[14] In the third century, St. Cyprian (ca. 250) referred to the church of Rome "whose faith was praised in the preaching of the apostle, *to whom faithlessness could have no access*."[15] In the fourth century, St. Gregory Nazianzen said: "Regarding the faith which they uphold, the ancient Rome has *kept a straight course from of old*, and still does so, uniting the whole West *by sound teaching*, and is just, since *she presides over all and guards the universal divine harmony*."[16] In the fifth century, the Greek historian Theodoret of Cyrus wrote: "This most sacred throne [Rome] takes precedence over all the Churches of the world for many reasons, but primarily because it has been *preserved from every stain of heresy* and no one who thought to the contrary has sat there, but instead it has *preserved the grace of the apostles intact*."[17] In the sixth century, Emperor Justinian, a cherished saint in the Orthodox Church, wrote: "Each time heretics have arisen in our midst, it is by a sentence and a true judgment of this venerable see [i.e., Rome] *that they have been condemned*,"[18] and "the priests of the Old Rome have followed apostolic doctrine in all things, have never differed among themselves, and to this day have kept the right and true doctrine."[19]

In the seventh century, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem said one could "wander from the edge of the earth to its outer limits until you come to the apostolic see, *where the foundations of orthodox dogmas stand*."[20] In the same century, St. Maximus the Confessor wrote: "For *from the very beginning*, since the incarnate God the Word descended to us, Christian

[14] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm (emphasis added).

[15] Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 54, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050654.htm (emphasis added).

[16] *Carmen de Vita Sua*, part 1, *PG* 37.1068, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 130 (emphasis added).

[17] Epistle 116, *PG* 83.1324, in *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present*, by Klaus Schatz, S.J. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 118 (emphasis added).

[18] *Code of Justinian*, I.1.7, quoted in *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*, by Jeffrey Richards (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 2014), 476–752 (emphasis added).

[19] Justinian, *Tractatus contra Monophysitas*, Migne, *PG* 86/1, in *Justinian the Great: The Emperor and Saint*, by Fr. Asterios Gerostergios (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982), 165.

[20] Sophronius, "To Stephen of Dor," Mansi 10.896, in *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, by Pelikan, 154 (emphasis added).

churches everywhere have viewed the Roman church, the *greatest among them*, as a *common stronghold and foundation*, as being—according to the Savior's promise—*forever invincible against the gates of hell, as possessing the keys to the Orthodox faith.*"[21] In the eighth and ninth century, St. Theodore the Studite wrote in a letter to Rome: "For assistance from you has been our one and only aid from of old and from the beginning by the providence of God in the critical times. You are, indeed, the untroubled and pure fount of orthodoxy from the beginning."[22]

Before we get carried away here, it should be said that these testimonies, beside St. Maximus, *in themselves*, do not require *an invincible papacy without error that must last until the end of this world's history.* But what they do achieve is to establish that for the first millennium, the See of Rome had been an extremely reliable bulwark for the authentic apostolic faith and had a proven track record for at least the first nine centuries of the Church.[23] In other words, if the Orthodox accept the wholesome orthodoxy of Elder Rome in the first millennium, and if they confess with the above Fathers that Elder Rome was the constant source of perpetual help in the fight for orthodoxy, then that would mean that first millennium Rome was supposed to be, ironically, *Eastern Orthodoxy par excellence.*[24] As the Encyclical of the Patriarch (1848) says, historic Rome in the first millennium was the "most honored part of the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," and a "model of orthodoxy." What Rome held, taught, and required of others is tantamount to the faith. This includes whatever version of papal primacy she held.

This happens to be one of the ironies that the perceptive Anglican scholar Henry E. Symonds exemplified in his final thoughts in his commendable and scholarly book *The Church Universal and the See of Rome* (1939). Throughout the book, he is quite fair with the evidence, and I often agreed with his observations. However, in the final two pages, he finds himself having to uphold two points which only stand together by

[21] Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theological et polemica*, II (*PG* 91.137–40), in *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1*, by Alfeyev, 110 (emphasis added).

[22] Theodore the Studite, book II, epistle 13, *PG* 99.1153, in *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility*, by John Chapman, O.S.B. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906), 75.

[23] Although, in later centuries, the lapses of Liberius, Anastasius, Vigilius, and Honorius would be examples to show an imperfect track record. Nevertheless, saints who were aware of these cases never ceased to laud the reliability of Rome. Contrast that with Eastern Orthodox Fr. Vladimir Guettée, who thinks that even in the seventh century, Rome had already strayed far away from the Apostolic Tradition (see *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches* [New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867], 252).

[24] As a Catholic, I merely speak hypothetically here for the sake of argument.

his imagination. The first point he sees is that the Roman church was the successful center of unity throughout the first millennium, and that to St. Peter's Seat "all eyes were cast, all looked for guidance."[25] The second point, crassly put, is that the popes of Rome practically ended up acting like dictatorial emperors, or, like E. Symonds says, one who wielded "autocratic power by which to lord it over the heritage of Christ."[26] Apparently, the unfitting scenario of the church of Rome being such a help to the universal Church in her fight against heresies and schisms while at the same time being claimants to unlawful autocratic power did not occur to Symonds. How could Rome have had this status as the rock and mainstay of the Christian and Apostolic Tradition all the while being herself wholly compromised by holding to a heretical form of papal primacy? The more likely scenario would be that the basic concept and idea of the papacy is true but that there were times of harsh and sinful exercises of authority, rather than this forced contradiction that Symonds has constructed.

What seems agreeable to non-Catholic historians is that first millennium Rome was so reliable that her position on the Apostolic Tradition should be upheld as the norm. What does not seem agreeable is that her position on the primacy was correct. But this oddity is quite predictable, for if her position on primacy was right, then the Petrinological DNA is essential to the Church's government, an element which is rejected in Orthodox and Protestant ecclesiologies. And if historic Rome's position on primacy is most likely the correct version, then we have good grounds to say that any ecclesiology upheld today *that lacks this element* is not a continuation of the historical tradition. If we could say that the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers of the Church exemplify for us a DNA pattern or an architectural blueprint for a home, they would both have something which has the basic Petrinological shape of St. Peter as the head of the Church and the highest office of doctrinal and disciplinary adjudication. It would appear that Orthodox ecclesiology has attempted to go back and edit the DNA or modify the blueprints since her ecclesiology today can be entirely cleansed of the Petrinological shape, at least on the universal level. In other words, you can add or subtract a universal Primatial office to and from Orthodox ecclesiology, and in either case, Orthodoxy is still Orthodoxy. That shows that universal primacy is not

[25] Henry Edward Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 269.

[26] Symonds, *The Church Universal and the See of Rome*, 269.

part of the essence of the Church in Orthodox ecclesiology and thus will be treated as something to be well respected but less than essential.

Orthodox critics of the papacy have attempted to undermine the above by showing how the maximum development of papal infallibility and supremacy are not explicitly detailed by the evidence that Catholic apologists bring to the table. That is significant and should not be ignored. Not every piece of data presented as evidence is supposed to be a perfect demonstration of this maximal development of papal doctrine. While some Catholics may have been guilty in the past of investing too much stock in the pieces of historical data, it remains that a cumulative case which considers all the evidence put together comprehensively yields a well-made case for the papacy. Taken as a whole, the argument here is that the kind of papal primacy that the first millennium best testifies to is one which makes the "*ecclesiological and theological DNA*," to quote Fr. Cleenewerck, to include the Petrine primacy as divinely inherited by the See of Rome, and that the latter is the final judge in matters of faith and morals. There is still a bit of distance from this to an explication of papal infallibility, but that distance is not drastically far apart, and is closed by a recognition of what logically results from the original idea.

The distance between a divinely appointed head who has the authority to bind and loose over the universal Church and the requirement of that head's decision to be protected from error is a logical derivation since Christ promised the Church will never err nor be overtaken by the gates of hell. It stands to reason that the *organ of teaching authority*, that is, the magisterium, must retain certain protections against destroying the Church by binding it under errors. And since, as the evidence shows, the successor of St. Peter was vital in the authority of councils and in the final arbitration of doctrine, some measure of doctrinal protection is implied.

2. **Rome's most influential periods in coming to the aid of the Apostolic Tradition during the first millennium were the times when she was the most assertive, clear-cut, and definitive concerning the divine appointment of her universal primacy. These claims were not simply implicit or pregnant but explicit and manifest, being made during the most doctrinally sensitive moments, such as in the official Acts of Ecumenical Councils and in the healing of schisms. All the while, these claims were never officially condemned by anyone. On the**

**contrary, they were outwardly accepted, embraced, lauded, and legally endorsed.**

When the Holy Fathers of the Church might have been mistaken in their private statements concerning the holy faith, it was, more so than not, in a context in which such errors were not detrimental to the health of the universal Church. St. Gregory of Nyssa may have taught a form of universalism. St. Epiphanius of Salamis may have thought it was heretical to have images of our Lord in the place of worship. St. John Chrysostom may have held that there were sins committed by the Virgin Mary. Some of the earlier saints may have espoused a version of Chiliasm. Pope Honorius may have taught Monothelitism.[27] However, none of these errors were disseminated in a teaching form which was intended to define a dogmatic definition as binding on the whole Church.

On the other hand, the supremacy of St. Peter and his divinely given prerogatives from the Lord Jesus Christ perpetuated in his successors was a doctrine that was proclaimed very clearly in authoritative decrees and in the ecumenical councils. These are venues where manifest errors are intolerable, and which are close to where the Church's voice is activated. If these claims were false, they would have thrown up red flags much earlier and been wholly cleansed from being considered acceptable. Therefore, to permit manifest error to reign in these venues would certainly stain the credibility and authority of the Church, perhaps with no ability to recover. But if these claims are true and acceptable by the patristic Church, then such absence of condemnation makes sense.

The papal claims as defined in *Pastor Aeternus* at the First Vatican Council have both a theory and a function. The theory is defined by the special design of Christ to bestow upon St. Peter the office of supreme governance over the universal Church, with universal jurisdiction and the prerogative of an infallible teaching ministry. A proof of the theory would simply be positive statements that the bishop of Rome, as the successor of Peter, has this teaching power. A proof of the function would be instances where he acts to exercise jurisdiction or teaching power over the universal Church.

Fortunately, many examples exist in the historical record to support both the theory and function. When Philip the legate stood up and introduced the pope as the divinely appointed head of the universal Church by his lawful succession from St. Peter, to whom the Lord Jesus, in a

[27] In the section on Monothelitism, I argue the case that Honorius did not espouse heresy.

singular way, entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, this was a manifest proclamation that made it into the *Acts* of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Ephesus 431). To this declaration, "replete with notions of Petrine authority,"[28] St. Cyril of Alexandria said that it stood "manifest to the holy council,"[29] and decided that it, together with other statements made by the other two papal legates, were to be entered into the minutes of the council to confirm the council's subscription and "canonical agreement." It was not found worthy of censure but quite the opposite. The council then described the statements made by the papal legates, including Philip's, as "most fittingly"[30] stated.

At the Council of Chalcedon (451), the papal legate Paschasinus openly announced the final excommunication of Dioscorus, the patriarch of Alexandria, as being achieved by the authority of Christ given to St. Peter and executed by the holder of that authority, the pope, with the ecumenical council as the instrument.[31] This is an unmistakable claim of the superior authority of the pope of Rome over the universal Church and the council itself. Dioscorus was condemned primarily by St. Leo the Great, and only secondarily through the council as an instrument. Notice the contrast between what Paschasinus and modern day interpreters say. He was not hesitant to affirm that the bishop of Rome is especially and uniquely "endowed" with the "dignity of Peter" through which he binds and looses, including the deposition of an Eastern patriarch. Whereas many interpreters today are still curious as to whether St. Peter, let alone his successors, was given a primacy of jurisdiction in the first place. But Paschasinus suffered from no confusion on the point, and the council thought it was acceptable enough to include in its written record.

At the beginning of the sixth century, when Emperor Justin and his nephew Justinian were seeking to reconcile East and West, the Greeks accepted the terms of communion mandated by Popes St. Anastasius and St. Hormisdas to heal the Acacian schism (484–519). This involved the explicit recognition of the letters of St. Leo and the papal claims

[28] Richard Price and Thomas Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431: Documents and Proceedings*, vol. 72, *Translated Texts for Historians*, trans. Richard Price (Liverpool University Press, 2020), 367.

[29] Session of 1 (July), in *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, by Price and Graumann, 380.

[30] Session of 1 (July), in *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, by Price and Graumann, 380.

[31] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 2, trans. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (Liverpool University Press, 2005), 70. At n100, Price notes that the Greek version reads differently: "Peter the Apostle, who is the rock and stay of the catholic church and the foundation of the orthodox faith" is all that is said concerning what Peter is endowed with. A far too minor a discrepancy, contra Price who says this is "less effusive about papal primacy."

hitherto made plain by the late fifth century popes codified in the famous Formula of Hormisdas. This formula, writes Chadwick, was a clear "insistence on the Greek churches" to embrace the need to obey the papacy in order to retain its communion.[32] There was not a single opposition to the papal claims then being made, as we saw in relevant chapters. Both older and updated scholarship recognize this as a "papal victory,"[33] and despite what the Eastern motivations were, the East solemnly recognized the divine institution of the papacy in that formula. If, as Kenneth D. Whitehead argued, the occasional resistance to papal authority proves that the papacy was false, "then the contrary phenomenon, this solemn adherence of the leadership of the Eastern Church to the wholly canonical Formula of Hormisdas *ought to tell in favor of the Roman primacy.*"[34] In other words, if sporadic challenges to papal claims merit the dismissal of them, then what can be concluded in light of the fact that "history records that there was a time in the early Church when both East and West affirmed *in most solemn terms* the primacy of Rome."[35]

This formula "played a significant part in the discussion about papal infallibility at the Vatican Council"[36] and was signed by the Byzantine Church "in the years 516 to 519, and again in 869," at the Council of Constantinople IV (869). According to Fr. Adrian Fortescue, "we have in this Formula an assertion of papal infallibility, in the sense of the [First] Vatican Council, and a declaration of the necessity of communion with Rome for membership of the Catholic Church."[37] Solemn subscriptions of the Greek Church to formal statements of papal authority such as this occurred again and again, as in the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439), but like the Formula of Hormisdas, such public agreements in faith were not upheld forever by the East. This leaves some room for a nuanced interpretation as to how the East may have understood the

[32] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 190.

[33] Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church: Letters from Late Antiquity*, trans. from the Greek, Latin, and Syriac by Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 38; John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 206.

[34] Kenneth D. Whitehead, *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: The Early Church was the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 288–89.

[35] Whitehead, *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic*, 288–89 (emphasis added).

[36] Adrian Fortescue, *The Reunion Formula of Hormisdas* (Garrison, NY: National Office, Chair of Unity Apostolate, 1955), 12.

[37] Fortescue, *The Reunion Formula of Hormisdas*, 12.

claims being made as slightly or greatly different than the Roman tradition. In substance, however, everything that Rome is asking the Eastern Orthodox to accept today as a criterion for healing the schism is what the Greek Church already outwardly accepted on more than one occasion in subscribing to the formula.

At the Council of Constantinople (681), the holy letter of Pope St. Agatho I, which proclaimed that the Apostolic See of Rome, held a unique privilege in the dissemination of the pure faith, a privilege founded upon the divine promise of the Savior to St. Peter, namely, when he converted from his apostacy, to strengthen his brethren in the faith. This letter was acclaimed as the driving factor in the council's success by all the Byzantine bishops and the emperor, in addition to many Western bishops prior to the council.[38] This was a perfect opportunity to identify the erroneous claim to indefectibility and examine it through a heresy trial, and yet the Greeks upheld the letter of St. Agatho as perfectly orthodox.

At the Council of Nicaea II (787), the two letters of Pope Hadrian I, read aloud and officially accepted in the *Acts*, were perhaps the most explicit concerning the Petrine prerogatives of the pope over the universal Church, and yet once these were finished being read out in both Greek and Latin, not a single bishop "expresses any reservations about the two letters."[39] On the contrary, consensus of the bishops had this to say of the epistles of Hadrian: "We follow, accept, and approve them."[40] Again, solemn acceptances.

At the Councils of Constantinople (869/879), there were unmistakable acceptances of papal authority. Included in the Council of 869, as noted above, are the signatures to the *libellus satisfactionis*, which was the *libellus Hormisdae* (or Formula of Hormisdas) expanded. According to Fr. Aidan Nichols, "Such acceptance [of the Formula of Hormisdas] was, after 869, in no way partial or local: the ecumenicity of the council

[38] The same council's condemnation of one of St. Peter's successors, Honorius, comes as a challenge here. If the options were (1) to abrogate the Petrine organ completely of its divine institution in light of Honorius, (2) or rather to devise a manner in which to interpret the Petrine institution such that some sort of teaching failure is capable while in other conditions it is not, the second option seems still preferable. That is because the first option simply clashed with too much scriptural and patristic consensus, and the second option has reasonable theological development to undergird the make of distinctions between fallible papal teaching modes versus infallible papal teaching modes.

[39] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 151.

[40] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, 182.

[of 869] by the criterion of 'pentarchy' . . . saw to that."[41] Not one objection raised to this council's decrees, though, again, it can be legitimately questioned what the Greeks were internally thinking in the process. At the Council in 879, the unambiguous remarks on papal supremacy by Pope John VIII were included in the Greek version of the *Acts*, changed not in the least by Photius, the functional president of that council. This is remarkable since here was a clear case where the Greeks were modifying the papal letters as they were brought into the official *Acts*, and yet nothing of the papal claims were modified. In light of this, we can say that Antiochian Orthodox historian Dr. Robert M. Haddad, in his following statement, is correct to contrast the consistency of Rome versus the inconsistency of the East:

> Rome, it must be said, enjoyed the *virtue of consistency* in asserting its claims to universal jurisdiction, whereas the East, while never accepting Rome's presumption, *failed to reject it* formally and unequivocally until the ninth century.[42]

In reality, the papal claims did suffer from various sources of resistance throughout the first millennium but were never seriously condemned. They were consistently put out in front of the Greeks, and no condemnations for this doctrine ever existed, contrary to what Haddad claims above, until the beginning of the second millennium. Photius rejected papal authority in 867 when he attempted to excommunicate Pope St. Nicholas, but he and the Greeks came around and accepted the papal claims given in the acts of the Council of Constantinople in 879. It must also be stated that these claims were not merely tolerated by the Greeks. The way they were received entails a formal acceptance. If it were such an egregious error, it could not have passed the critical eye of the Church during these most crucial moments where doctrine and fidelity to Tradition were handled with utmost care and protection, namely, at the ecumenical councils and the healing of ecumenical schisms.

Thus far, we have only considered the Greek acceptance. We should

[41] Aidan Nichols, *The Latin Clerk: The Life, Works, and Travels of Adrian Fortescue* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011), 85. In other words, this council had the participation of all five patriarchal sees and should by that standard be credited as ecumenical. Indeed, the Latin and Greek bishops at the Council of Constantinople (879) saw to it that the Council of 869 needed to be officially annulled in light of its legitimate standing prior to said nullification.

[42] Robert M. Haddad, "The Stations of the Filioque," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 46:2 (2002), 211.

not, as has been emphasized, ignore the fact that the Latin acceptance of the divine papacy is also a testimony against the contemporary Eastern Orthodox rejection of it since these Western saints are equally part of the spiritual and ecclesial patrimony of the Orthodox as are their Eastern saints. It is not as if we could somehow demonstrate that if the Greeks rejected the papal claims that this would score points for the contemporary Orthodox since then we would still have the stain of their Western saints teaching the doctrine.

The Orthodox might retort to all of this with the idea that the Eastern bishops, and perhaps even the Latin bishops, did not interpret the papal claims as they would be further defined in later centuries. Nor were the Western saints promoting the papal supremacist view of the later medieval period. There is the possibility that all the testimonies in favor of the papacy are simply to be explained as Byzantine flattery. If this were true, then the Orthodox would land some damaging shots toward the Catholic side.

However, there are good enough reasons to reject this as being unable to explain all of the data. For the very same reasons we would *not reject* the idea of an ecumenical council as being dogmatically authoritative simply because there are rhetorically exaggerative statements made about it, we would likewise not reject the papacy. For example, St. Gregory the Great compared the first four ecumenical councils to the four Gospels. That is not meant to be so poetic as to deny a realism that St. Gregory is trying to communicate concerning the irreformability of those councils.

Secondly, there were times, such as during the iconoclast controversy, where Eastern saints would promote the papal claims of jurisdiction and infallibility while conversing with their fellow Eastern kinsmen. This certainly occurred with the writings of Sts. Nicephorus and Theodore the Studite, as shown in the relevant chapter. One might try to assert the explanation of flattery when people are writing to the pope to beg him for his help, but that would not apply when they write to their fellow kinsmen who themselves are already disposed against the views of Rome. Plus, it would be a disservice to saints to pretend that their flattery was so off the mark from reality to seem almost deceitful.

Not all Orthodox historians see the Byzantine flattery explanation as sufficient. Above we saw some astonishing words from Fr. Alexander Schmemann, but here he somewhat balances his statements by clarifying how the Greeks interiorly understood the papal claims, despite what appears to be a blatant acceptance of the papacy. He writes:

> The East *made no formal answer* either to Celestine at Ephesus or to Leo at Chalcedon. When Pope Celestine's legate at Ephesus declared that "Peter, to whom our Lord Jesus Christ has given the keys of the Kingdom and the power to bind and loose sins, now and forevermore remains and judges in the person of his successors," *the Greek bishops remained silent.* The protest of Pope Leo the Great against the twenty-eighth canon at Chalcedon . . . was answered by Patriarch Anatolius with a cowardly renunciation of responsibility for the canon, assuring the pope that without the latter's approval *not one of the decrees of the ecumenical council could be in effect.* Even more characteristic of this eternal compromise with Rome was the signing of the Formula of Hormisdas by the Eastern bishops in 519, ending the thirty-year schism between Rome and Constantinople. *The whole essence of the papal claims cannot be more clearly expressed than in this document, which was imposed upon the Eastern bishops.*[43]

Here, Fr. Schmemann understands the Byzantine Church as having been committed to some sort of compromise, perhaps to maintain this *modus vivendi.* The East did not truly accept these claims interiorly, says Schmemann, but they also did not exteriorly reject them. With this inconsistency, he figures there is enough room to allow for a future rejection of these same claims on formal terms. In total agreement with this was Rev. Christopher Butler, O.S.B. (1902–1986), who converted to Catholicism from the Church of England and was a speaking scholar at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Butler confronts the question of how an individual is supposed to test the rival claims between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. He followed with the following statement:

> History allows no doubt that—to look back no further than the fourth century—the See of Rome was, from the

[43] Schmemann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, 241. On the same page, Fr. Schmemann quotes an anonymous Russian historian who says, summarily, that by the Greek practice of appealing to Rome and accepting her juridical decisions, the Greeks were showing, by way of "illusion," that they "too, shared the Western concept of the papacy." Fr. Schmemann does not believe the Greek church ever internally accepted the papacy dogmatically, but rather that the Greeks silently tolerated it in the public terms and conditions of important affairs, failing to condemn it.

> time of the later decades of that century onwards, *making no secret of its primatial claims*. . . . The Roman claims continued to be asserted thereafter for half a millennium till 1054. . . . Although, as that half millennium wore on, the East became more and more intent on living its own life and tended to pay little attention to Rome, it is extraordinary that the essence of *the Roman claim encountered practically no protest from the official Eastern Church*. . . . It is not as though the East was allowed to remain unaware of the Roman claims. As we have seen, *these claims were clearly stated in the Formula of Hormisdas*, which the East, through its individual bishops, accepted as a formula terminating the Acacian schism.[44]

In another work, the same author echoes this point:

> Is it too much to say that, in the body of evidence, including actions and statements of an Ecumenical Council, we have as much proof as could be expected, from a period nearly twelve hundred years before the [First] Vatican Council, that the juridical and doctrinal primacy of the See of Peter is a genuine element in the faith of the Church? In particular I would urge our Eastern Orthodox and Anglo-Catholic friends to ask themselves, what was the united Catholic episcopate doing in 451 and again in 680, if it failed to protest against papal claims which were already unequivocal, which were brought into play precisely in doctrinal issues which had set the whole East agog, and which nevertheless were (on modern Eastern and Anglican premises) a monstrous distortion of the Christian faith and a malignant cancer within the body of the Church. . . . The obvious question to ask here is: What more was Rome demanding in AD 1054 than the East had not conceded at the end of the Acacian schism (AD 519) and in the confession of faith presented to Pope Agapetus by the Bishop of Constantinople whom he consecrated in AD 536?[45]

[44] B. C. Butler, *Church and Unity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 214.

[45] B. C. Butler, *The Church and Infallibility* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 206–07.

Consequently, Butler sees that the Orthodox tradition, known for its constant handing on of the former tradition, allowed this part of the tradition to be completely dropped after having at least tolerated the papal claims for peaceful communion.[46] Fr. John Meyendorff has an entirely different take from these historical events. While Hadaad, Schmemann, and Butler think the papal assertions of the Fourth and Fifth Councils, together with the Greek subscription to the Formula of Hormisdas, count as external acceptance of the papacy, Fr. Meyendorff explains it differently:

> But we, Orthodox, still do recognize that there is a special ministry, a special *diakonia* of universal primacy and that such diakonia implies a particular divine charisma. Our problem with Roman Catholicism is that we disagree with the *immovability*, the *infallibility of the Roman idea of primacy*, and therefore, with the very *particular*, and indeed *disastrous way*, in which the Christian West *later interpreted* the exercise of primacy, by such men as St. Leo, St. Martin, St. Gregory the Great, and other great Roman bishops. *And we believe that the charisma was indeed transferred to Constantinople.*[47]

Here, Fr. Meyendorff implies that the Roman Catholic Church has had disastrous interpretations of the saintly bishops of Rome that only came "later." Thus, he would assert that the Latin West was not making the papal claims of the late medieval West. That would make perfect sense since Fr. Meyendorff probably understands it to be a sort of stain to the Orthodox pedigree if he were to concede, along with Fr. Schmemann, that the papal claims of the Western saints were tantamount to the papal claims that, in part, caused the Greek and Latin schism in the second millennium. Moreover, Fr. Meyendorff understands that the patriarch of Constantinople, because it is New Rome, has received all the prerogatives of Elder Rome. Certainly, the Orthodox reader can leverage whatever differences are to be seen from the papal claims of the fifth century versus the eleventh century.

Of course, the commentary provided in the relevant chapters

[46] Butler, *The Church and Infallibility*, 206–07.

[47] Meyendorff, "The Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Twentieth Century," in *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*, ed. John Chryssavgis (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 395 (emphasis added).

concerning the pontificates of the popes that Fr. Meyendorff mentioned should clearly demonstrate the weakness of his interpretation. He is under the impression that these popes did not support the idea of the "immovability" or "infallibility" of the Roman primacy. But it is precisely that which finds a place in their testimonies on papal authority, most especially in Pope St. Leo the Great. In the first place, we have the claims, hitherto reviewed more than once, by both the papal legate Philip at Ephesus (431) who said that St. Peter "lives and performs judgment, until *now and always*, through his successors," adding that it was Pope St. Celestine who was his successor.[48] Secondly, you have Pope Hadrian (787) who, in his letter to Empress Irene and Emperor Constantine VI that was read aloud at the council and put into the *Acts*, says: "For the blessed Peter . . . who was the first to preside over the apostolic see, left the primacy of his apostolate and pastoral responsibility to his successors, *who are to sit in his most sacred see forever.*"[49] Finally, you have Pope St. Leo (450) himself who says that "Peter, *who does not cease to preside over his see* and obtains an *abiding partnership with the eternal Priest.* For the stability which the rock himself was given by that Rock, Christ, *he conveyed also to his successors*,"[50] and "the solidity of that faith which was praised in the chief of the Apostles *is perpetual*: and as that remains which Peter believed in Christ, *so that remains which Christ instituted in Peter.*"[51] You have Pope St. Agatho (681) who claimed that the primacy and orthodoxy of the Roman church "remains undefiled *unto the end, according to the divine promise* of the Lord and Saviour himself, which he uttered in the holy Gospels to the prince of his disciples."[52] Surely, their understanding of the papal office was that it is co-extensive with the survival of the Church itself. It would appear, both *prima facie* and after examination, these claims exceed the minimalism of Fr. Meyendorff's claims.

When the popes claimed the Petrine primacy as of divine institution,

---

[48] Price and Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431*, 378 (emphasis added).

[49] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea* (787), 157 (emphasis added).

[50] Leo, Sermon 5, *PL* 54.153, in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority: A.D. 96–454*, by Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 281 (emphasis added).

[51] Leo, Sermon 3, §2, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360303.htm (emphasis added).

[52] Third Council of Constantinople, Letter of Pope Agatho, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Percival (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3813.htm (emphasis added).

they regarded it "as a permanent and necessary structure of the Church, related to its very essence."[53] Thus, if "the connection between succession in the primacy and in the Roman episcopacy was considered to be of divine right, then there was no possibility of ever moving the primatial see of Rome."[54] In other words, what is divinely instituted by Jesus Christ is irreversible and unchangeable. The Orthodox church could never fathom the episcopal government of the Church undergoing change or reversal to a purely presbyterial government. In the same way, the Fathers that Fr. Meyendorff references as acceptable to Orthodoxy all testify to something far surpassing what he calls a universal diakonia (service); namely, they held to immovability, irreversibility, and infallibility as inclusive with that diakonia.

Furthermore, it was no less than St. Leo the Great himself who balked at this idea that the See of Constantinople could have transferred to it the primacy invested in St. Peter and inherited by his successors in the Roman bishopric. As we saw in the chapter on the primacies of Old and New Rome, Dr. Walter Ullmann shows quite conclusively that St. Leo employed the language of Roman law to describe the legal inheritance of the bishops of Rome to St. Peter's office. Such being the case, there are no historical precedents for Rome's universal primacy to be transferred to the See of Constantinople. In any case, Constantinople, to my knowledge, makes no peep about herself being the See of St. Peter or the occupant of St. Peter's throne, as Elder Rome did and still does.

Still, an Orthodox might point to the fact that while the observations made above are true, that does not erase the history of the Fifth Council's opposition to Pope Vigilius nor the Sixth Council's condemnation of Pope Honorius as a heretic. Admittedly, if I were Eastern Orthodox, this is where I'd keep my finger. However, there are still reasons to make these points less considerable. First, as I showed in the previous chapters, those who subscribed to the divine papacy, both before and after the Greek and Latin schism, held that a pope may be quasi-judged or resisted if he were to try to teach an error. Pope Innocent III himself, the greatest pope to express his papal authority, held that a pope can be resisted and even judged (recognized his self-deposition) for heresy. This means that within the papal doctrine, an exception for a condemned pope is still on the table as a possibility which is not intrinsically incoherent with the

[53] J. Michael Miller, *The Divine Right of the Papacy in Recent Ecumenical Theology, Analecta Gregoriana*, vol. 218, *sectio* B, *series Facultatis Theologiae*, n70 (Roma: Universitá Gregoriana Editrice, 1980), 56.

[54] Miller, *The Divine Right of the Papacy*, 57.

doctrine itself. This has not been explored in recent ecclesiastical studies, but it surely needs to be born anew. As for the condemnation of Pope Honorius, it should be kept in mind that the council's decrees depended upon the pope's ratification. Pope St. Leo II confirmed the anathema of Pope Honorius, and so his condemnation rested upon papal authority. Honorius had been dead for about forty years, and a successor is permitted to judge a predecessor who held the papal throne.

That also means that the Honorius situation is not an example of a sitting pope being condemned by a council. For that, the Fifth Council's motion against Vigilius is the only real example we have like that in the first millennium (see Chapter 16 of this book). These scenarios might pose a significant challenge to the doctrine of the papacy, enough to keep the debate going. Keep in mind, however, that even after the events of Vigilius and Honorius, papal claims of Pope Hadrian were still externally accepted at the Seventh Council (Nicaea 787), and so it would appear that the papacy, as an institution, was not considered abrogated because of some less-than-worthy occupants to St. Peter's throne. The point I am aiming at here is that the papal theory was manifestly stated at times where conciliar recognition counted for at least an external acceptance, that the papal claims were consistently made clear in the external terms of communion between East and West, and that the same claims were never formally condemned despite their being unmistakably claimed in the open.

3. **Significant voices from the Eastern saints testify to the supreme authority of Rome as a matter of divine law and not merely as a moral first among equals nor a canonically restricted reality. As such, the Roman view of papal primacy entered the bloodstream of the Eastern patrimony.**

As described in the chapter on Pope St. Leo the Great, the bishops of Rome counted themselves as the *legal heir* of St. Peter, to borrow from Roman law, to whom the Lord gave a certain investment of authority to pastor his universal flock (*Tu es Petrus*). This is not founded upon a customary assignment which is then codified by canonical form. However, it cannot be denied that bishops of Rome would cite canons to show forth how the Roman See was practically living out her primacy, but the base origin was never the canons. Pope St. Gelasius I (492–496) was famous for referring to the prerogatives of the canons which prescribed

the Apostolic See as judge over the whole Church. But at the same time, he understood that behind these canons stood the voice of Christ to St. Peter:

> On this account we are not afraid that the apostolic verdict be undone, which *Christ's utterance* and the *tradition of the elders* and the *authority of the canons* support, but rather it may always judge the whole church discriminately.[55]

Likewise, when St. Maximus the Confessor described the original foundation of Rome's primacy, he made an unmistakable reference to the divine origin of Christ in his ordination of St. Peter, as shown in the commentary of the book. Fr. Richard Price recognizes "three distinct bases"[56] for Rome's primacy in the mind of St. Maximus. They are (1) "Rome's status as the guardian of the orthodox faith," (2) "its inheritance *through the promise of St. Peter* (Matt 16:18–19)," and (3) "its recognition in canonical decrees."[57] The dual efforts of Sts. Sophronius of Jerusalem (560–638) and Stephen of Dor both show adherence to the divine origin of Rome's primacy. In his outspoken address at the Lateran Council (649), Stephen of Dor communicated why he came to Rome to petition the pope for a condemnation against Monothelitism:

> I desire to denounce monothelitism to the chief See. . . . Your see is accustomed to do so since the beginning by its apostolic and canonical authority. *For it is evident that Peter received* not only the keys of heaven, but he alone amongst all. . . . He [Peter] alone was to confirm his colleagues and brethren, since God, who became man for us, gave him power and priestly authority over all. . . . And Sophronius, the former patriarch of blessed memory, *knowing this*, told my lowliness to come without delay to this great Apostolic See.[58]

[55] Gelasius, Letter 10, in *Epistulate Romanorum*. See also Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, eds., *Letters of Gelasius I (492–496): Micro-Manager and Pastor of the Church of Rome* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2014), 114.

[56] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 37. Here, Price follows precisely from Philip Booth.

[57] Price, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 37 (emphasis added).

[58] Mansi 10.896, in *Eastern Orthodoxy's Witness to Papal Primacy*, by Stanley Jaki (Huron, MI: Real View BooksPort, 2004) 6–7 (emphasis added). One might also see Price's translation in *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, 142–49.

Here, it cannot be mistaken that both of these eminent voices which shined during this period of collapse in the East into Monothelitism understood that Rome's primacy was not founded or based on purely canonical legislation, but rather that the latter reflects the primacy of Rome. A reflection and a cause are not the same, in this instance.

Speaking of Pope Hadrian I (772–795), the portions of his letters that were cited in the previous chapters display the Petrine foundation of Rome's universal primacy in a manner which is irreconcilable with modern Orthodox theories. Even Fr. Laurent Cleenewerck notes that the Seventh Council's acceptance of Hadrian's letters "constitutes the highest point of recognition of what we can call 'Roman Catholic ecclesiology' in the East."[59]

The clarity that emerged on the Petrine foundation of Rome's primacy from divine foundation in the Formula of Hormisdas, which was "signed by the majority of the eastern bishops,"[60] makes it unmistakable that the East was aware of the claims, and put forth a willingness to bear the communion of those who dogmatically upheld it. The letters of St. Theodore the Studite are also remarkable examples of *sincere* Eastern acceptance of the divine Petrine institution. I'll cite once more from Fr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis, who deduced from the Studite's letters that "the first millennium leaves no room for doubting that the pope's primacy in terms of such Petrine ministry were *universally acknowledged and accepted even by the Greek-speaking Church*."[61]

Lastly, the letters and disciplinary documents issued by Popes St. Nicholas, Hadrian II, and John VIII, all of which form the basis of the whole essence of the papal dogma, were never once scrutinized or rejected openly. Even when the occasion for altering papal letters was given, such as Photius did at the Council of 879, "the passages stressing the Papal primacy *were left virtually intact*."[62]

In contrast to the above accepted beliefs, the prominent Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy, former Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, can say that the contemporary Orthodox Church "refuses to recognize Peter's exclusive prerogative and its

---

[59] Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body*, 200.

[60] Olivier Clément, *You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 35.

[61] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 36 (emphasis added).

[62] J. N. D. Kelly, "John VIII," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986), 111.

transference to the see of Rome."[63] Appealing to the common power of the keys of the kingdom for all of the Apostles, Fr. Bobrinskoy is convinced that the "Orthodox Church cannot accept the attribution of the promise made in Matthew 16 exclusively to the see of Rome."[64] Over the relationship between the Apostle *Peter* and the universal *Roman primacy*, the interpretative disagreements between Catholics and Orthodox "remain deep," says Fr. John Zizioulas, and the Catholic interpretation in particular is still "strongly disputed" by Orthodox theologians.[65]

The first thing that can be said is that, as Fr. Schmemann and Fr. Cleenewerck could see, the papal West was making explicit claims which amounted to the "whole essence" of the *Pastor Aeternist* position, and more importantly, significant voices in the East give unmistakable defense of it. Secondly, it must be kept in mind that the "papal West," insofar as it consists of the exemplary Western heritage of the contemporary Eastern Orthodox Church, a heritage consisting of innumerable holy popes and Fathers of the Church who continue to be venerated by the East, must not be calculated as the negligible "Roman Catholic" side of history. The papal West, in other words, is part of the patrimony of Eastern Orthodoxy, and, as such, *must be calculated as the belief of Eastern Orthodox Fathers*. Their testimonies are to be revered, especially when it is proposed in a manner which exceeds mere theologoumenon (theological opinion).

A perfect example of this can be seen in Pope St. Boniface (422): "None has ever been so rash as to oppose the apostolic primacy, the judgment of which *may not be revised*; none rebels against it, unless he would be *judged in his turn*."[66] Another example would be St. Leo the Great (450): "*Only that* should be ratified in heaven which had been *settled by the judgment of Peter*."[67] This was no opinion, in his mind, when he got the wind of Chalcedon's twenty-eighth canon, which he said he annulled on the authority of Peter. St. Anatolius, the bishop of Constantinople at

---

[63] Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Church: A Course in Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 267.

[64] Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Church*, 268.

[65] John Zizioulas, "Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology," in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Cardinal Walter Kasper (New York: The Newman Press, 2006), 224.

[66] Pope Boniface, Epistle 15, *PL* 20.782, in *Documents*, by E. Giles, 231 (emphasis added).

[67] Leo, Sermon 51, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360351.htm (emphasis added).

the time, submitted to the pope's judgment since, as he stated clearly, the decrees of councils stand or fall by the pope's judgment.[68] These testimonies cannot be written off as "a theologoumenon of the West." They are incorporated in the patrological data, and they must count for what they testify to.

Furthermore, it might be worth asking what kind of documentary evidence would be required for a particular doctrine to show itself as part of the binding patristic tradition? Perhaps if we use iconodulism and Palamism as a comparative analysis, we can better shed light on the matter of the Petrine primacy. What kind of evidence exists in the early centuries for a clear and explicit teaching on the doctrine of the holy icons (Nicaea II, 787) or that of the Palamite doctrine concerning the functional distinction between God's essence and his actions? Prominent Orthodox scholar Fr. Andrew Louth writes on this point:

> It would seem *obvious to an historian* that neither the eighth-century doctrine of the necessity of making and venerating icons nor the fourteenth-century Palamite distinction between essence and energies *can really be found in the fourth-century Fathers.*[69]

And yet, contemporary Orthodox would be at pains to say that, prior to the eighth century, it was an acceptable opinion to destroy images or condemn their veneration from the churches. Likewise, they would not be inclined to say that the essence/activity distinction in God was a matter of theologoumenon prior to the fourteenth century. These doctrines are considered apostolic and dogmatic for the Eastern Orthodox religion, despite the fact that there is a remarkable scarcity of documentary evidence in the Church Fathers all the way past the fourth century.

---

[68] Some might point to the fact that Anatolius didn't cease the practice that had been going on for at least sixty years (as it was claimed). Well, that kind of inconsistency speaks more to the man's character, and I'd rather assume the best of a venerated saint. We simply don't know precisely what he did or said after giving verbal submission to Leo's annulment of the council's canon.

[69] Andrew Louth, "Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology?" in *Orthodoxy and Western Culture: A Collection of Essays Honoring Jaroslav Pelikan on His Eightieth Birthday*, eds. Valerie Hotchkiss and Patrick Henry (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2005), 47. For how icon veneration is the result of a gradual process of philosophical and theological developments, see "Why Should There Be Such a Thing as Christian Art at All?" in *St. Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons: Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium*, by Torstein Theodor Tollefsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 151–66.

And yet, if we consider the enormous amount of testimony already in the fourth century concerning divinely instituted primacy of St. Peter in Rome, it leaves one to wonder how the Petrine primacy in Rome could be either doubted or relegated to the status of a mere theologoumenon, or worse, an error. If we can subjugate the debate between Catholics and Orthodox on the Roman primacy to the rules of fairness, it becomes clear that the Church Fathers, both Eastern and Western, do show a recognition of the papacy, and that it should count so significantly as to surpass the level of mere Western theologoumenon.

4. **The version of papal primacy expressed by first millennium Rome gained so much traction, influence, and instrumentality in protecting and preserving the Apostolic faith on behalf of the universal Church, it is not reasonably said that this primacy was a matter of historical accident or something merely permitted by God. Rather, it bears the quality of God's intended purpose and plan.**

Roman Catholics are known for proposing certain *a priori* arguments for the papacy, such as the epistemological need of a singular coherent agency of authority and the singular visibility of the earthly Church. These are not conclusive, but they have their merit. Certainly, the belief that Christ founded an infallible Church that would occupy the office of Teacher in place of his own teaching ministry is a belief that many Orthodox and all Catholics can agree with. With that said, we may observe that there is an *a posteriori* argument for the papacy. With the benefit of being able to look back upon the history of the first millennium, one can see that the Church was battered over and over with schism and heresy. From the beginning, we see that the papal-Roman constitution plays an essential role in fixing the Church in an orthodox posture against the blows of false doctrine. Beginning with the major crises such as Arianism, Novatianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism, we find that the orthodox Rome played a central role in the sifting out of these heresies. Two of the greatest examples of this would be the post-Chalcedonian scandal of the Eastern patriarchs, who were failing to be secure on the status of the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the Monothelite controversy in the East just before the Council of Constantinople (681). In both of these instances, the papacy functioned to heal the body of Christ.

Therefore, there is an *a posteriori* motive of credibility on behalf of

the papacy which says that if the papal-Roman constitution played such a vital role in the perpetuation of the Christian faith, especially during times when others were not, what are the odds that the governmental theory being claimed by the church of Rome was merely accidental under the divine scheme and not (intrinsically) part of the divine design of the Lord for his Church? In other words, it seems likely that the papacy was part of God's plan both because of its inherent claim to being *jure divino* and precisely because it was used over and over to protect the faith from heretics.

We might add a reverse *a posteriori* argument. Would we expect it to be the case for the ecumenical primate of the first millennium of Christianity to be so blinded from the truth that he consistently helped the Church through appeals to unfounded and unlawful claims of universal authority, only to find out in the second millennium that the Church is truthfully not under the jurisdiction of that primate but is spread out in mere autocephalous national churches? That would be too unfitting to even consider for more than a moment. Well, if that is the case, then it is only fitting that the divinely appointed universal primate should have been led into the truth of his position, a position which happened to have come to the Church's repair throughout so many centuries.

5. **After the schism between Latins and Greeks, the Eastern Orthodox scarcely continued with the same ecclesiological principles of Petrine primacy that were unmistakably upheld by historic Rome throughout the first millennium, manifestly demonstrating a clear mark of discontinuity. This is principally shown in two ways: (A) the basis upon which current day Orthodox bases the primacy of Constantinople, and (B) the wholesale rejection of a universal primacy of jurisdiction (with governing prerogatives) by Orthodoxy's largest body, the Russian Orthodox Church.**

It is reported that the late Anglican scholar Dr. Charles Gore once posed the question, "When the Eastern Church in 1054 separated itself from the See of Rome, did it abandon anything that at any period whatever had formed part of its belief?"[70] To answer straightaway, the Catholic

[70] Pierre Batiffol, *Catholicism and Papacy: Some Anglican and Russian Difficulties* (London: Sands & Co., 1925), 45.

might say that Greek Catholicism up to at least the ninth or eleventh century had believed in the divine Roman primacy and later gave it up entirely. To this, our friendly interlocutors on the Orthodox side retort, "Ah, we accept Roman primacy, but not supremacy, nor the sort of autocracy now proclaimed by the pope." This is an attempt to show that it is the Latin West, rather than the Greek East, which has strayed from the faithfulness of historic Rome when she had a nice track record of orthodoxy. Implied in this rebuttal is that the Eastern churches, from the point of the schism to the present, continued the belief and practice of the historic Elder Rome of the first millennium. This claim deserves scrutiny.

The majority of Eastern Orthodox literature would admit that the church of Rome was the *first* church in the taxis (order) of hierarchical sees. But the question really comes down to what is the source or basis of that primacy and what rights and prerogatives are involved? What often gets said in response to this is that the Orthodox believe that Rome was made the first see because of its imperial status as the capital of the sovereign emperor. The city of Rome was the height of imperial prestige, and so the church of Rome should match the imperial model for the sake of administration in Church affairs. Secondly, this primacy was simply one of "honor," and not jurisdiction. As Ed Siecienski states:

> For the Constantinopolitans the matter was simple: The religious organization of the church mirrored political realities and since "New Rome" was now the capital, its church should have the same powers and prestige long enjoyed by "Old Rome." The Roman bishops (or "popes") saw things differently. They believed that Jesus had given Peter a unique headship over the church when he gave him "the keys to the kingdom" (Matt 16:19) and that this role was inherited only by those who succeed Peter as Bishop of Rome. For the popes the primacy of the Roman church was thus established by Christ himself and could not be changed by the vagaries of politics. Although these two views coexisted relatively peacefully for several centuries, albeit with occasional tension, this fundamental disagreement about the church's structure would eventually have ruinous consequences for the cause of Christian unity.[71]

[71] Siecienski, *Orthodox Christianity*, 10–12.

Today's Constantinopolitan patriarch, Bartholomew I, the first see in the taxis of Churches in World Orthodoxy (that is the full number of canonical autocephalous churches together), continues to deny that St. Peter was given any unique authority over the Apostles or the Church,[72] let alone that Rome's primacy is based on divine institution. Rather, Rome was *primus inter pares* (first among equals).[73] Rev. John Chryssavgis, the archdeacon of the patriarchate of Constantinople, confirms this in no uncertain terms:

> Several times, and notably in Zurich on December 14th, 1995, the Patriarch has stated that there is *no biblical foundation* for the notion that the ministry of the Pope involves governance over the entire Church. The command addressed by Christ to Simon Peter applies to *each bishop*, and to *all the bishops together*, according to the conciliar principle. Certainly the Church of Rome, a church founded by the Apostles Peter and Paul, was given the responsibility of solicitude, of "presiding in love" among the local churches, but certainly *not of governing over these churches*. Before the schism, the Bishop of Rome was *primus inter pares*, in full interdependence with all bishops who were, collegially, the successors of the apostles. In an interview given at the end of June, 1996, to the Polish weekly Tygodnik Powszechny, the Patriarch again criticized the developments in the papacy after the schism, to the point that it claimed a "direct and truly Episcopal," worldwide jurisdiction over all the faithful and all bishops—his jurisdiction is "*a theological error*," Bartholomew affirmed.[74]

---

[72] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 14.

[73] Bartholomew, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, 14.

[74] Bartholomew, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, 14 (emphasis added). However, there is a report from 2019 which claims that the ecumenical patriarch does not believe there are any dogmatic differences between Rome and the Eastern Orthodox. He is said to have communicated this during a visit to the monks on Mt. Athos; see Elena Konstantinova, "Head of Phanar in Athos Persuades Monks to Unite with Catholics," *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, November 25, 2019, https://spzh.news/en/news/66683-glava-fanara-na-afone-ubezhdal-bratiju-v-neobkhodimosti-jedinenija-s-katolikami.

This could hardly be thought of as a perpetuation of historic Roman thought on the matter. The ecumenical patriarch is not a lone voice, at least in the denial of the divine institution of universal Petrine primacy. The patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia, by far the largest autocephalous church in the World Orthodoxy, making up "approximately 160 million—more than those of all other local Orthodox churches combined,"[75] issued an extremely important document entitled *The Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church.* This document rejects any notion of a universal primacy of jurisdiction, and leaves the universal primate to be one of strictly honor in respect to the canons. The document proceeds to declare the idea of universal jurisdiction, of any kind, as "Papism."

The position of Constantinople still differs with Moscow on the matter, as the latter was responding to the former's acceptance of the Ravenna document's description of universal primacy as a divinely instituted organ of Christ's Church. It is safe to say, nonetheless, that the Orthodox do not tolerate a universal primacy that entertains the idea of jurisdiction over the other bishops, especially one based on divine institution. Nectarios of Aegina (1846–1920), a wonderworker and preeminent saint in Orthodox devotion since the twentieth century, gives his interpretation of the Roman primacy in history in his two-volume work on the Greek and Latin schism, which is described as "the most detailed work on the schism by a modern Greek author, and is written with historical accuracy and impartiality."[76] Nectarios writes:

> The One, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, constituted of the local Churches, united in faith, hope, love and worship, *was always free and independent,* and was never subject to the Pope of Rome, *nor did she ever recognize him as a greater hierarch,* nor accord to him spiritual charismata and superiority, but regarded him as a bishop, *like all the bishops,* since he himself received the same consecration, as had the other bishops, from the Apostles.[77]

[75] Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1,* 290.

[76] Constantine Cavarnos, *The Question of Union: A Forthright Discussion of the Possibility of Union of the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism,* trans. Patrick Barker (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1992), 18.

[77] Nectarios, *Historical Study on the Causes of Schism: On its Perpetuation and on the Possibility of Impossibility of Unity of the Two Churches, the Eastern and Western,* vol. 1 (Athens: P. Leoni, 1911), 67; Constantine Cavarnos, *The Question of Union: A Forthright Discussion of the Possibility of Union of the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism,* trans. Patrick Barker

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, the spokesman for the Russian Orthodox Church in public relations, can be sure that the Orthodox Church "has never had a single primate," and that Constantinople's place as "first among equals" does not give him "any jurisdictional rights *beyond the boundaries of his own patriarchate*,"[78] and with no special prerogatives above that. In a work of Orthodox dogmatic theology, translated by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, Fr. Michael Pomazansky erroneously wrote that the "rejection by the ancient Church of the view of the bishop of Rome as the Head of the Church and Vicar of Christ upon earth *is expressed in the writings of those who were active in the Ecumenical Councils*."[79] And yet, others view the patriarchate of Constantinople as being an equal head to Elder Rome in all of her jurisdictional privileges toward the universal Church.[80]

At least this is clear: whichever version of universal primacy each individual Orthodox hierarch claims is true, based on this or that prelate's understanding of the canons and history, none of them comes close to the position of historic Rome, as all the foregoing chapters on the question clearly show. The supposed equality of the primacy of Elder and Younger Rome, as advanced by many Byzantines,[81] finds no acceptance in the first millennium. For several reasons, this position is entirely

(Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1992), 67; Cavarnos, *The Question of Union*, 21 (emphasis added). On the same page, Cavarnos says the following: "In the Acts (of the Apostles) the primacy of Peter neither appears nor is hinted at. None of the Apostles ascribes primacy to him, or anything else indicative of superiority or rule. . . . In the Epistles of the Apostle Paul there appears no trace of Peter's primacy. . . . In the catholic Epistles of Peter, James, Jude, and John the primacy of Peter or his sovereignty in the Church as unifying bond of the Churches appears nowhere to be established; on the contrary, they regard as the unifying bond the love and the truth which uphold the communion of the Churches with the Father and the Son. Likewise, in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers nothing is found concerning the primacy and sovereignty of Peter as the unifying bond of the Church. The pervading spirit in them concerning the unity of the Church is the same as the spirit of the New Testament. . . . The unity of the Church is not founded and established on the single person of one of the Apostles, but on the person of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church, in one spirit, in one faith, hope, love, and worship."

[78] Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1*, 336 (emphasis added).

[79] Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition*, trans. and ed. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997), 228 (emphasis added).

[80] Lewis J. Patsavos, *Primacy and Conciliarity: Studies in the Primacy of the See of Constantinople and the Synodal Structure of the Orthodox Church* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1995), 8.

[81] See especially Metropolitan Máximos of Sardis, *The Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Orthodox Church*, trans. G. McLellan (Thessalonike: Patriarchal Institute, 1976).

untenable. As Fr. John Meyendorff said above, it was purely for political reasons and the social realism of the principle of accommodating the Church to the geo-political framework of the empire that Constantinople was due its elevation to primacy. But where do we ever read of the papal primacy of Rome resting on this worldly principle? Just review what was said in Pope Hadrian I's letter to St. Tarasios read aloud at Nicaea (787). The whole edifice of the theory of a Constantinopolitan primacy on practically the same level as the throne of Elder Rome is consistently, perpetually, and directly rejected by Rome, and equally acknowledged by the Byzantines.

Even modern Orthodox theologians who are avid supporters of the universal primacy of Constantinople according to the ancient canons recognize that when the East was in communion with Rome, the primacy of Constantinople was only "*among the other patriarchs of the East.*"[82] With regard to the ninth and seventeenth canons of Chalcedon, I appeal to the knowledge and authorities of the late Archbishop Peter L'Huillier and Fr. John Erickson, both former professors of Orthodox canon law at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, in seeing the extent of Constantinople's court of appeals to that of the limited territory which she oversaw as patriarch, *or the whole East at most.* As such, the prerogatives of Rome were universal and therefore even over Constantinople. The famous canonist Zonaras confirmed that Constantinople's status was not that of equal to Elder Rome but in subordination to Rome.

Even when we find instances where the pope gives outward acquiescence to the second place of Constantinople, it was on the condition that the pope, out of his own authority, admitted this to be legitimate. "For as to what they say about the Church of Constantinople," says St. Gregory the Great, "*who can doubt that it is subject to the Apostolic See,* as both the most pious lord the emperor and our brother the bishop of that city continually acknowledge?"[83] And: "for, as to his saying that he is subject to the Apostolic See, if any fault is found in bishops, *I know not what bishop is not subject to it.* But when no fault requires it to be otherwise,

[82] Maximos Vgenopoulos, "Primacy in Orthodox Theology: Past and Present," in *Primacy in the Church*, ed. Chryssavgis, 250 (emphasis added).

[83] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 9.12, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second Series, vol. 12 eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360209012.htm (emphasis added).

all according to the principle of humility *are equal*."[84] That is a succinct picture of historic Rome's position on the matter.

In 1024, the patriarch Eustathius of Constantinople wrote to Rome in order to obtain the approval of the title "Universal Bishop" as far as Eastern territories were concerned, and he explicitly acknowledged that the pope of Rome alone carried the title "Universal" in relation to all the churches of both East and West.[85] As late as here, there is no impression that Rome and Constantinople are two equals with each other in relation to the universal Church. While the Byzantines, after the great date of 1054, slowly conformed to Constantinople in removing the pope's name from the diptychs, they show proof that they no longer held that the *Tu es Petrus* investment was really the divine charter proving the divine institution of the Roman primacy. They began to argue that the exclusive application of St. Peter's primacy to Rome was unfounded, as argued by the famous Eastern writer, Nicholas Mesarites (1163–1216). For him, every church has the same grace of St. Peter.[86]

The letter of patriarch John X Camaterus of Constantinople (1198–1206) to Pope Innocent III shows how the Byzantines were ready to argue that all the Apostles were equals, Peter only having a purely honorific primacy and pastoral mission to the Hebrews.[87] Furthermore, they held that the universal primacy of Rome was not based on Peter but rather because "Rome at that time was the residence of the emperor and of the senate."[88] Nilus Cabasilas stressed this as well when he said, "But I affirm that it is not from Peter that the Pope got his primacy over the other bishops. . . . [A]s to the primacy, *he received it much later from the blessed Fathers and the pious Emperors, for it was just that ecclesiastical affairs be accomplished in order*."[89] Once again, this is to be significantly contrasted with the position of St. Leo the Great.

Perhaps the most glaring example of basing Roman primacy on the secular status of the city of Rome as the capital of the empire is the

---

[84] Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 9.12, *New Advent* (emphasis added).

[85] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. Edwin A Quain, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 130; A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 242.

[86] Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 98–99.

[87] Joseph Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy (1198–1400)*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 12.

[88] Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy (1198–1400)*, 12.

[89] Nilus Cabasilas, *PG* 149.701 CD, in *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 89.

Byzantine princess and historian, Anna Comnena (1083–1153), who famously said that when the Emperor Constantine transferred the capital of the empire to Byzantium, renamed later Constantinople, all of the privileges of Elder Rome were also transferred to Constantinople, and now the latter has "all the dioceses of the inhabited world under his jurisdiction."[90] The implication there is that Old Rome's universal jurisdiction was founded upon its being the emperor's capital. The prominent Confession of Faith by Metropolitan Peter Moglia (died 1647) states quite emphatically that the emperors gave primacy to both Old and New Rome.[91] One of the first historic critiques of the papacy comes from Niketas Seides (twelfth century), and here I simply summarize Dr. A. Edward Siecienski's own gloss on Seides.[92] For Seides, the See of Jerusalem was a better candidate for universal primacy,[93] and Rome was granted primacy based upon the political standing of the Roman city.[94] Nevertheless, some exceptions were known. Symeon of Thessaloniki exercised caution by saying:

> One should not contradict the Latins when they say that the bishop of Rome is the first. . . . Let them prove his faithfulness to the faith of Peter and to that of the successors of Peter. *If it is so, let him enjoy all the privileges of Peter.*[95]

A different Niketas, archbishop of Nicomedia, was famous for engaging in a debate about the papacy with Anselm, bishop of Havelberg (d. 1158).[96] He went very far in recognizing that the Roman See was first above all other sees, and that to her, appeals to should be made. Although he claimed Rome's ancient primacy came from its imperial standing, he went far in admitting the function of primacy by Rome in

---

[90] Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, trans. Elizabeth A. S. Dawes (London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1928, repr. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), 2, quoted in *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800–1800*, by James Muldoon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 52.

[91] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 348–49.

[92] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 268.

[93] Michael Angold, "The Fall of Jerusalem in 1187 to Saladin and Its Impact on Byzantine Opinion," in *Byzantium and the West: Perception and Reality 11th–15th c.*, eds. N. G. Chrissis, Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Angeliki Papageorgiou (London: Routledge, 2019), 157.

[94] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 268.

[95] *Dialogus contra haereses*, 23, *PG* 155.120AB, in *Byzantine Theology*, by Meyendorff, 100 (emphasis added). The same point is made by Theophylact of Ohrid (ca. 1107), cf. Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 266.

[96] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 268–71.

the first millennium. Even so, he accused Rome of usurping an ecclesiastical supremacy based on incorrect data.[97] For this Niketas, as Niketas Seides cited above, it was the political standing of Rome that drew to her the prerogatives of primacy. As for St. Peter, Niketas of Nicomedia attempted to downplay the Petrine constitution by saying that the power given by the Lord to St. Peter was common to all the Apostles.[98] "Quite simply, the power to bind and to loose mentioned in the New Testament had been granted during Christ's ministry to every disciple and not just to Peter alone. . . . For all bishops, as successors of the apostles, claim the privilege and power granted to Peter."[99] John X Camaterus stated the following: "Where do you find in the holy Gospels that Christ said that the Church of the Romans is head and universal mother and the most catholic of all the churches . . . or by what ecumenical council was what you say about your church decided?"[100] He rejected Rome as head, and restricted her as "*first among equal sisters*."[101] The position of Eastern Orthodoxy regarding the Roman primacy begins to diverge from historic Rome's position. Outstanding contemporary scholarship acknowledges this as is shown by this summary of the Byzantine perspective by Dr. Aristeides Papadakis:

> But if the Roman primacy did not in the end originate with Peter, where did it ultimately stem from? For the patriarch [John X Camaterus], as for *all Byzantine Orthodox theology*, there was but one answer: it was to be found in the life of the historic Church itself, or more precisely, in the canonical activity of its ecumenical councils. Contrary to Innocent's firm conviction regarding the Petrine proof-texts, the patriarch insisted that the origin of the Roman primacy (and of all other primacies for that matter) was determined *not by divine decree* but by *Church legislation*, that is, by *purely historical factors or considerations*. In the end, it was on Rome's preeminent *political position*, as the imperial residence and

[97] Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church AD 1071–1453* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 158.

[98] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 270.

[99] Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy*, 160.

[100] Quoted in *Diversity and Communion*, by Yves Congar (London: SCM, 1984), 87; citation retrieved from *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, The Eucharist, & Church Unity*, by Paul McPartlan (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 39n30.

[101] Quoted in *Diversity and Communion*, by Yves Congar (London: SCM, 1984), 87; citation retrieved from *A Service of Love*, by McPartland, 39n30 (emphasis added).

> center of the empire, that the councils of the Church had based their decision to invest Rome with the primacy. Primacy did not arise from Christ's promise to Peter or from "apostolicity" but from the *contingencies of politics and history, or from purely pragmatic considerations faced in the past by church councils.*[102]

And so on. There were, according to Papadakis, no "new arguments against" it thereafter.[103] He's quite right, and this aligns perfectly with Siecienski's description given further above. All these Byzantine arguments outright deny the Roman understanding of the Petrine origin, nature, and extent of its primacy. However, there were a few exceptions that existed in the thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries. Off and on there were pro-unionist clergy of the East who were ready to give way to the papal claims. Under Manuel II (1254), patriarch of Nicaea-Constantinople,[104] negotiations opened with Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254), one of many who reigned at the height of papal power and for whom reunion with the Greeks was a treasured prize. Manuel recognized this desire and sent a letter seeking terms of peace, stating that "whatsoever Your holiness together with our envoys shall conclude and ratify will be accepted by them as by all of us."[105] After a certain back and forth, Greek envoys eventually showed up with authoritative willingness to acknowledge the Petrine-Roman constitution of ecclesiastical supremacy, insofar as it did not contradict the "gospel and canonical precepts."[106]

While this appeared promising, the pope having no issues with the terms, the union never came to fruition. Thereafter, under the throne of Emperor Michael VIII Paleologus (1223–1282), for whom reunion with the papacy was paramount, Pope Clement IV sent the terms of unity between Byzantium and Rome that were manifestly overt on Petrine-Roman constitution. These terms were eventually agreed to by both the emperor and Greek bishops at the Council of Lyons (1274), which led to further frustrations between unionist and anti-unionist

---

[102] Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy*, 164 (emphasis added). See also citation from Demetrius Tornikes in *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy*, by Papadakis, 165n36.

[103] Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy*, 166.

[104] This was during the time of the Latin patriarch in Constantinople, with the separated Greek line reigning in Nicaea.

[105] Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy (1198–1400)*, 90–91.

[106] Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy (1198–1400)*, 91.

parties in Constantinople.[107] Ultimately, the council was not *received* by the Easterners. Once more, under Emperor John VIII, all the Greek delegates at the Council of Florence, except for Mark Eugenicus of Ephesus, signed on to the decrees defining the Roman primacy. Initially, the decree on primacy went as follows:

> Also in the same way we define that the holy, apostolic, and Roman Pontiff is the *successor of Peter* and vicar of Jesus Christ, *head of the whole Church* and father of all Christians, our teacher too, and that he holds the *primacy over the whole world*, and that to the same See and Roman Pontiff in St. Peter the prince of the Apostles there was given *plenary power* of feeding, convening, ruling, and governing the whole Church.[108]

Bessarion, archbishop of Nicaea, who was one of the principal delegates of the Byzantine faction, engaged in some back and forth with the Dominican theologian, John Montenero. Bessarion inquired whether the term "head" referred to Rome as like a "metropolitan or patriarch," to which John said, "No . . . the successor of Peter has the *immediate power* of a superior over all."[109] Eventually, all of the Greek delegates (minus Mark of Ephesus) managed to find a compromise in the above decree with the addition that the "privileges and rights of the patriarchs of the East"[110] should not be violated. Agreement was reached. All documents were signed. Union was pronounced, and the two halves of Christendom were united again, at least for a time. Even though all "formal signs"[111] of an ecumenical council had been achieved, when the Greeks returned home, their union with the Latins was perceived as a false union, and the council never obtained the favor of the whole East. The anti-unionists won out, as "the fiery sermons of Mark Eugenicus found everywhere a most enthusiastic response."[112]

---

[107] Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy (1198–1400)*, 161–199.

[108] Andreas de Sanctacroce, *Advocatus Consistoriali: Acta Latina Concilii Florentini*, ed. G. Hofmann (Romae, 1955), 231–6, quoted in *The Council of Florence*, by Joseph Gill, S.J. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 274 (emphasis added).

[109] Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 279 (emphasis added).

[110] Andreas de Sanctacroce, *Acta Latina Concilii Florentini*, 453, quoted in Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 284.

[111] Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Vol. 1*, 135.

[112] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 563.

In all of this, it becomes clear that the Greek episcopate following the eleventh century were continually denying the divinely instituted Petrine-Roman constitution, intended by Christ to be part of the essential architecture of the Church. Even those Orthodox authors today who might try to say that the Orthodox accept a universal Petrine primacy akin to a universal archbishop have their theory overturned by the fact that the patriarchs of Constantinople have been consistent in denying such a reality. These same conclusions were driven home forcefully by the two greatest Orthodox documents refuting the papacy written by the patriarchs in 1848 and 1895.

If one bears in mind the sacred prerogatives that were attributed to the pope by St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Nicephorus of Constantinople, St. Theodore the Studite, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, St. Stephen of Dor, St. Flavian of Constantinople, and St. Athanasius the Great, just to name several of the many, from whom we have unmistakable adherence to the Petrine institution of the Roman primacy, and believed that the successor of St. Peter could intervene in Eastern affairs on both discipline and doctrine, it becomes clear that the Greeks, in answer to Dr. Gore's question, have given up on a doctrine which some of their chief saints upheld prior to the schism. And if we consider contemporary Orthodoxy's largest body of believers, namely, the Russian Orthodox Church, we can see that their leadership, via the Moscow Statement against the Ravenna document, has categorically rejected the idea of a universal primate who has universal jurisdiction. This seems to be as far as one can go in divergence from historic Rome's position.

6. **The visible unity of the Church is best preserved by a monarchical form of government as the principle of administrative unity, where there exists one supreme judge to whom all questions on faith or discipline are referred amidst the impending threats of theological division and schism. The lack of a unifying head renders the Orthodox Church nearly incapable of convening a successful pan-Orthodox council universally binding on all the baptized. Because of this, the Orthodox Church still does not have a supremely authoritative defense of its severance from the Apostolic See of Rome, nor does it appear that such a council can be held without the pope.**

After looking into the history of the Church and the system of Catholic tradition on the subject of the papacy, the definition of the papacy as an institution comes with some clear-cut reasoning that can be easily understood and satisfying to the natural intellect. In other words, there is an *a priori* defense for something like the papacy in the fact that a visible church should have a single head for the maintenance of visible unity. Though this defense is weak since, by itself, it doesn't necessitate a reflection of what Christ actually did, the concept is extremely fitting. It just so happens that in addition to the *a priori* defense according to natural social philosophy, there is ample history to add support. The Catholic bishops at Vatican I summarized the basic *a priori* understanding as rooted in divine Revelation:

> And in order that the Episcopate also might be one and undivided, and that by means of a closely united priesthood the multitude of the faithful might be kept secure in the oneness of faith and communion, He set Blessed Peter over the rest of the Apostles, and fixed in him the abiding principle of this twofold unity and its visible foundation, in the strength of which the everlasting temple should arise, and the Church in the firmness of that faith should lift her majestic front to heaven.[113]

The Catholic bishops here observe that Christ appointed St. Peter to the office of head amidst the Apostles for the purpose that the episcopate, the governing organ of the Church, might be one and undivided. The logic here is straightforward, and this whole concept has been treated in the chapter describing the Catholic position on primacy. Christ made one chair of primacy to be occupied by one Apostle, St. Peter, for the purpose of maintaining one Church. The singularity of the chair is ordered to the singularity of the one Christ and the Holy Eucharist. Pope St. Gelasius, citing from the corpus of his predecessor, Pope St. Simplicius (d. 483), in his correspondence with the East, includes commentary on the unique primacy of St. Peter among the Apostles:

> Was it that the rest of the holy and blessed Apostles were not clothed with his virtue? Who dare assert this? No, but that,

[113] *The Decrees of the Vatican Council*, ed. Vincent McNabb (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1907), 35–36.

> *by a Head being constituted*, the occasion of *schism might be removed*, and that the compact bond of the body of Christ, thus uniformly tending, by the fellowship of the most glorious love, to one Head, *might be shown to be one*; and that there might be one Church faithfully believed in, and *one house* of the *one God* and of the *one Redeemer*, wherein we might be nourished with *one bread* and *one chalice*.... There were assuredly twelve Apostles, endowed with equal merits and equal dignity; and whereas they all shone equally with spiritual light, yet was it Christ's will that *One amongst them should be the Ruler* (prince).[114]

In order that the whole Christian society might dine at one altar and eat one Eucharist, there is the unity of that society ensured by the unity of a single head uniting all the members of the Church into one body. And, as shown above, the Orthodox Church is today unsettled on whether there is a universal head based on divine institution, and there is even further dispute over whether this model originates with the *Tu es Petrus* investiture from Christ to St. Peter. This basic concept was also wonderfully summarized in the wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas:

> The agreement of all the faithful in faith is one requirement for the unity of the Church. When questions of faith arise, the church would be rent by diverse judgments were it not preserved in unity by the judgment of one.... We cannot doubt, then, that one man presides over the whole church by the ordinance of Christ.... the best form of government ensures the peace and unit of its subjects; and one man is a better source of unity than many together.... And because he would be absent in the future, it was necessary for him to issue his commission to someone to take care of the universal church in his stead. Hence he said to Peter before his ascension, "Feed my sheep."[115]

[114] S. Butler, Dahlgren, and Hess, eds., *Jesus, Peter, & the Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1996), 267; Colin Lindsay, *The Evidence for the Papacy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), 55–56 (emphasis added).

[115] Thomas Aquinas, "Of the Episcopal Dignity, and That Therein One Bishop is Supreme," in *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation (with some abridgment) of the Summa Contra Gentiles of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. and trans. Joseph Rickaby, S.J. (London: Burns & Oats, 1905), 399–401, quoted in *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts*, ed. Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 231.

What makes a world of difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism is whether we understand the Roman primacy of jurisdiction to be one of immediate, direct, and ordinary versus mediate, indirect, and extraordinary. The Orthodox are more amendable to the latter position. Why must the Catholic Church hold the former? The Catholic bishops at Vatican I read the Gospel according to St. John where it is said to St. Peter by the Lord, "Feed My Sheep," as a direct command to pastor the whole Church. In other words, this is a direct and immediate command by Christ to St. Peter, and therefore, it must be that St. Peter has access to directly and immediately obey that command. And since Christ's direct command involves the entire flock (every baptized Catholic) as the object of St. Peter's pastorship, there must be a direct and immediate access from St. Peter to the flock to obey that command. St. Peter need not pull permits or seek permission before acting on that command. That is the scriptural and theological root of the immediacy of the pope's jurisdiction. As the First Vatican Council makes clear:

> And it was upon Simon alone that Jesus after His resurrection bestowed the jurisdiction of Chief Pastor and Ruler over all His fold in the words, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." At open variance with this clear doctrine of Holy Scripture, as it has ever been understood by the Catholic Church, are the perverse opinions of those who, while they distort the form of government established by Christ the Lord in His Church, deny that Peter in his simple person preferably to all the other Apostles, whether taken separately or together, was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction; or of those who assert that the same primacy was not bestowed *immediately and directly* upon Blessed Peter himself, but upon the Church, and through the Church on Peter as her minister.[116]

[116] *The Decrees of the [First] Vatican Council*, ed. Vincent McNabb (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1907), 37. That last part there, wherein the Catholic bishops have excluded the primacy given immediately to the Church and then through the Church to St. Peter as an "agent" of the Church, is a summation of the Eastern Orthodox position, even of those Orthodox who are sympathetic to high forms of primatial authority. This is why it is so crucial to nail down whether the Sacred Scripture and the Holy Fathers teach that St. Peter, and his successors in the Roman bishopric, were endowed with their primacy directly and immediately from Christ when he stood face-to-face in the flesh before St. Peter himself, or if the Church herself, through a canonical motion of synodality, granted to the Roman bishop certain primatial prerogatives. If it is the latter, then Catholic ecclesiology on the papacy

In absolute contradiction to this, the Orthodox believe that the Roman primacy is due to canonical legislation based on the primacy of the imperial capital in the Roman Empire. In this view, the Church grants Rome a certain primatial prerogative, conditioned by ecclesiastical canons, but there is no divinely immediate link between Rome and all other churches. Rather, it is mediated through conciliar and canonical legislation. In the Orthodox polity of autocephalism, where each of the regional churches (consisting of patriarchs or metropolitans, and the bishops underneath them together with all of their local eparchies) is self-governed, the See of Constantinople, let alone any other see, has no right to intervene or give authentic commands to which is owed any obedience. If something deserves attention in a particular eparchy, there must be an appeal lodged. This activates the ecclesial canons which then vests the patriarch of Constantinople to hear the appeal and render a judgment. And this would be only feasible for those Orthodox who are open to a universal primacy of Constantinople, which involves governmental jurisdiction. Since that is nowhere near the consensus, my description here above is still a matter to be disputed by the Orthodox.

On the other hand, if it were true that the universal primacy of historic Rome was truly based on the Church giving her this prerogative on the basis of its being the imperial capital through the mode of conciliar assignment, then the Orthodox position on primacy would be correct. Papal jurisdiction would then be mediate, indirect, and extraordinary. For the Catholic, if there are absolute barriers to the jurisdiction of the pope, such as obtaining permits from the authorities of the realm to which

---

grounds to powder. If St. Peter's Chair and the popes of Rome act merely as an instrument of the Church, then this is also how the Orthodox understand the capacity for the See of Constantinople to rise to the place of equality with lder Rome, since the Church can simply canonically motion the prerogatives of Elder Rome to New Rome. This is how some perceive a sort of Petrine-Constantinopolitan primacy over the World Orthodoxy today. Such a reality is wholly excluded by the founding principles of the direct commission to St. Peter, as testified by Scripture, the Fathers, and the councils. And thus it really boils down to this point, which gets at the divergence between the Orthodox and Catholics: Is the office of universal primacy the product of an immediate institution by Christ, or is it mediated through the Church as her instrument? If it is the latter, then Rome might be the universal primate for X number of centuries, then Constantinople might be the universal primate for another Y set of centuries, and then, presumably deemed potential in light of current divisions between Constantinople and the Russian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church can do without both the communion of Elder and Younger Rome as well as their primacies. This shifting principle of unity is to be contrasted with the understanding held by Catholics that the office of St. Peter as universal primate was immediate and directly from Christ and permanently stationed in the Roman bishopric.

the pope intended to enact discipline, then the founding principle of the pope's jurisdiction could not be a direct command from the Lord since the latter would abrogate all barriers.[117] But since, as the Scripture already cited from St. John proves, it was a direct command equipping St. Peter with direct prerogatives, there is nothing that can stand[118] in the way of St. Peter and obedience to Christ's command to govern the Churches. Without this kind of monarchical government, the visible Church is open to disintegration or at least a paralyzing stalemate between equal hierarchs. Just observe the attempts at the Orthodox Church in convening a pan-Orthodox council, particularly the recent attempt by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's claim to have the right to convene the Council of Crete. When he convened the council in 2016, it was to be based on consensus.[119] It only took the withdrawal of certain churches (Antioch, Georgia, Bulgaria, and Russia) to render that impossible. Are these churches culpable for disobedience? My assumption is they are not, but a clear answer to the question remains to be realized. Fr. Nicholas Afanasiev hit the nail on the head when he gave the reason for why the Orthodox have not convened any ecumenical councils:

> Thus in the West, councils continued to exist even after the separation of the churches, because the primacy of the Bishop of Rome was firmly established there. In the East there were no more ecumenical councils. All attempts to convoke a pan-Orthodox council in our own age have not succeeded, and it is rather unlikely that such a council could ever be convoked. *This is due to the absence of a primacy capable of commanding recognition by all the Orthodox churches.* There is no pan-Orthodox head of the Church,

[117] Lest it be mistaken, even if the source, origin, and extent of St. Peter's jurisdiction is directly and immediately from Christ and therefore directly and immediately universal to the universal Church, this does not obliterate the proper organization that was so intuitively held by the early Church that is rooted in the principle of subsidiary. Rome might enjoy certain prerogatives, but she should not be directly and immediately involved in the affairs of every Church at all times. The proper and just organization is one where Rome is the last court of appeals and all hierarchical levels are respected with regard to the authority given to them by Jesus Christ and from the canonical law of the Church.

[118] Save for the command to sin or heresy.

[119] Timothy Ware, "Synodality and Primacy in the Orthodox Church: From the Keynote Address by Metropolitan Timothy (Ware of Diokleia) at the IOTA Inaugural Conference, 9–12 January 2019 in Iasi, Romania," *Orthodox Christianity*, Jan. 16, 2019, https://orthochristian.com/118652.html.

> consequently any convocation of a council is a practical impossibility.[120]

With a unity that is always based purely on the mutual agreement of all the wills of each participant in the church's episcopate, the scarcity of achieving that demonstrates the weakness of that unity. It is even worse when churches cave in to "nationalistic and political dissensions that make a mockery of the ecumenical claims of Orthodoxy."[121] But since the Church is said to be "one" in the holy creed, and visibly one at that, it is more appropriate, and far more reasonable, for the polity of Christ's Church to include a single monarchical head so that the occasion for schism is eradicated. This is the same idea that St. Jerome outlined as a justification for the rule of one monarchical bishop governing his local church. If such a need exists on the local level, then surely the need would be even greater on the universal level. In the commentary on St. Leo the Great in the relevant chapters, it was clearly demonstrated that Christ made a distinction of power within the episcopate, such that all members and heads (bishops and metropolitans) should "converge" at St. Peter's "one Seat," that is, the Roman See. Ergo, a sort of monarchy was posited in the record of the Fathers.

This is also said to be the best way to ensure the "unity of faith" (Eph 4:5), since the variable interpretations of Scripture and Tradition could yield to a multiplicity of factions. To illustrate this, St. Robert Bellarmine, though responding to Lutheran theologians, insisted that there cannot "be one Faith in the Church, if there were not one supreme judge, to whom all were held to acquiesce." He goes on:

> The very fact of the dissension of the Lutherans, which we see, certainly teaches us sufficiently, even if there were to be no other reason that they do not have one to whom all are held subject as their judge, thus they have been divided into a thousand sects; still, they all descend from one Luther and *yet they could not compel one Council in which all would come together.* Rather, even the most obvious reason persuades it.[122]

---

[120] Meyendorff, *The Primacy of Peter*, 102 (emphasis added).

[121] Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, 213.

[122] Robert Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Tomus II*, vol. 1, *On the Roman Pontiff*, trans. Ryan Grant, 64 (emphasis added).

St. Bellarmine's point that the Protestants have none who can "compel" obedience to a council seems to redound equally to Orthodox polity unless, of course, the See of Constantinople is to obtain the prerogative of the canons for regional synods and their heads who can convene such synods. As far as I have seen, this is hotly debated by many hierarchs and members of Orthodoxy. And even if there were to be a special prerogative granted by the canons to the ecumenical patriarch to convene a council, what is the constitution of the council itself? Who enforces its decrees?

These questions are especially pertinent when the council, as often was the case, was not a cozy meeting of agreeable friends. There are several directions in which said council could go. If ultimately not acceptable to the bishops, the patriarch of Constantinople is in no position to command, order, or compel obedience. The struggle and tension between this or that claimant of authority, whether it be pope, council, or emperor, has led the current ecumenical patriarch to make the following quip concerning authority paradigms in the patristic era: "Ultimately, no one had the ultimate authority. Everyone pretended to have the last word, *but no one had it, except the Holy Spirit.*"[123] Once, again, a remarkably similar appeal was made by other Orthodox theologians who see no guarantee of doctrinal correctness in the institutional structure. But that only serves to illustrate this practical absence of an ecumenically binding organ of authority in the Orthodox Church.

A good example of this was the late Anglican scholar William Palmer (1811–1879). When Palmer wanted to convert to Russian Orthodoxy, he learned that while the Russians would only require him to renounce his errors and to receive the sacrament of confirmation, the Greeks would start entirely from scratch and rebaptize him into Jesus Christ. When he inquired to the patriarch of Constantinople on this question during his face-to-face visit in Constantinople, Palmer received the following answer: "[W]e have . . . One Baptism. If the Russians do otherwise, we know it not, nor recognize it."[124] What worth was there in joining the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church when, by joining the Russians, one remains "a heathen in the eyes of the Greeks."[125]

---

[123] Olivier Clément, *Conversations with Ecumenical Bartholomew I* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 177.

[124] Robin Wheeler, *Palmer's Pilgrimage: The Life of William Palmer of Magdalen* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), 335.

[125] Vladimir Solovyev, *Russia and the Universal Church* (London: Geoffrey Bles—The Centenary Press, 1948), 67.

Metropolitan Timothy Ware lamented in a lecture he gave at the IOTA (International Orthodox Theological Association) conference that such a difference as exists between the Russian Orthodox, ROCOR (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia), Mt. Athos, and the Greeks is more than a mere disagreement on discipline, "but raises a point of doctrine," namely, "do non-Orthodox Churches possess a valid sacrament?"[126] This is no insignificant fracture. Vladimir Solovyev (1853–1900), a Russian theologian, had in some ways predicted the outcome of the separation between Rome and Constantinople several decades ago. Today, with Moscow and Constantinople severed, we have a perfect illustration of the sort of stalemate that autocephalism creates since the regional synods are each and of themselves equal with all others and none has the right to compel the other to obedience, much less directly interfere to discipline. Solovyev wrote:

> It is obvious that there are questions on which the Russian Church could and ought to negotiate with the Mother See [Constantinople], and if these questions are carefully avoided it is because it is a foregone conclusion that a clear formulation of them would only end in a formal schism. The jealous hatred of the Greeks for the Russians, to which the latter reply with a hostility mingled with contempt—that is the fact which governs the real relations of these two national Churches, in spite of their being officially in communion with one another. But even this official unity hangs upon a single hair, and all the diplomacy of the clergy of St. Petersburg and Constantinople is needed to prevent the snapping of this slender thread. The will to maintain this counterfeit unity is decidedly not inspired by Christian charity, but by the dread of a fatal disclosure; *for on the day on which the Russian and Greek Churches formally break with one another the whole world will see that the Ecumenical Eastern Church is a mere fiction and that there exists in the East nothing but isolated national Churches.* That is the real motive which impels our hierarchy to adopt an attitude of caution and moderation towards the Greeks, in other words, to avoid any kind of dealings with them. As for the Church of Constantinople, which in its arrogant

[126] Ware, "Synodality and Primacy in the Orthodox Church."

> provincialism assumes the title of "the Great Church" and "the Ecumenical Church," it would probably be glad to be rid of these Northern barbarians who are only a hindrance to its Pan-Hellenic aims.[127]

Writing as a Russian, Solovyev felt more comfortable being this explicit and unrestrained. For myself, I cannot help but to read here some exaggerations and unnecessary judgments. However, I do hear a ring of truth in that the global unity of the Eastern Orthodox is greatly affected by its inability to confront a schism as vast as that between Moscow and Constantinople. The act of the current patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, in issuing autocephalous status to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has now resulted in such a schism since it is strongly opposed by the entire Church under the patriarch of Moscow.

However, Solovyev's rather harsh statements do not meet with unanimous disagreement by his own kin. Before this plan of Patriarch Bartholomew fell through, the metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev agreed somewhat with Solovyev when, during an interview, he said that Constantinople's action would create "a threat of schism for the Universal Orthodoxy. . . . By his actions he will, in fact, *split the world Orthodoxy*."[128] As a result, the on-looking world is awaiting to see how this schism will be resolved, given the autocephalism with which it is stuck. While there certainly have been calls for a pan-Orthodox synod,[129] at which the conflict in Ukraine could be settled, the Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople has no desire for such a synod,[130] especially after a

---

[127] Solovyev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 67–68 (emphasis added).

[128] Hilarion Alfeyev, "The Current Situation Creates a Threat of Schism for Universal Orthodox," *Orthodox Christianity*, Sept. 9, 2018, http://orthochristian.com/115613.html (emphasis added).

[129] See *Vatican Insider's* interview with Vladimir Legoyda, the Head of the Russian Church's Synodal Department for Church, Society, and Media Relations, at "Moscow Wants a Pan-Orthodox Meeting to Overcome the Ukrainian Crisis," *La Stampa*, last modified July 2, 2019, https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2019/05/10/news/moscow-wants-a-pan-orthodox-meeting-to-overcome-the-ukrainian-crisis-1.33700954; "Three Hierarchs of Bulgarian Orthodox Church Make Statement on Situation in Ukraine," *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*, Oct. 9, 2018, https://mospat.ru/en/2018/10/12/news165075/; "The Serbian Church Re-affirms Its Position on Church Situation in Ukraine," *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Relations*, May 14, 2019, https://mospat.ru/en/2019/05/31/news174793/; "Four Greek Metropolitans Call on Primates to Convene Pan-Orthodox Council about Ukraine," *Orthodox Christianity*, Dec. 2, 2019, https://orthochristian.com/126046.html.

[130] Olga Tsviliy, "Phanar Rejects pan-Orthodox Discussion of the Ukrainian Question,"

pan-Orthodox synod was already convened in 2016, which certain Orthodox Churches refused to attend.[131] Clearly, he supposes this synod has authority.

This creates another source of tension, especially for those who insist that the convening of a pan-Orthodox synod requires the authority of the patriarch of Constantinople to do so. For example, when it was suggested that the patriarch of Jerusalem might be able to initiate a kind of synod of primates[132] (or a simpler gathering) in Jordan to discuss the Ukrainian problem, Patriarch Bartholomew was sure to remind the Jerusalem patriarch that it is he, Bartholomew, who has the right to convene pan-Orthodox councils:

> [T]he Pan-Orthodox Synods of the Primates have been always summoned by the Ecumenical Patriarch, who presides over these Synods. What kind of unity does your initiative want to serve, if the First of the Orthodox Primates in rank is absent from the Synod you propose?[133]

Making claims such as this come very close, if not all the way, to saying that the patriarch of Constantinople is the principle of unity for the whole Orthodox Church. It is therefore unsurprising that some have come out and accused the ecumenical patriarch of papism,[134] as the patriarch of Moscow had done.[135] In any case, all of those accusing

*Union of Orthodox Journalists*, March 1, 2019, https://spzh.news/en/news/60527-fanar-otkazalsya-ot-vsepravoslavnogo-obsuzhdenija-ukrainskogo-voprosa.

[131] "Ecumenical Patriarch: They Are Asking for Synod Now. They Should Have Recognized Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete and Have Come," *Orthodox Times*, March 7, 2020, https://orthodoxtimes.com/ecumenical-patriarch-they-are-asking-for-synod-now-they-should-have-recognised-pan-orthodox-council-of-crete-and-have-come/.

[132] Olga Tsviliy, "Patriarch Theophilos Invites Head of Phanar to the Council of Primates," *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, Jan. 3, 2020, https://spzh.news/en/news/67559-patriarkh-feofil-priglasil-glavu-fanara-na-sovet-predstojatelej.

[133] "Ecumenical Patriarch to Patriarch of Jerusalem: Don't Persist in the Initiative of a Meeting," *Orthodox Times*, Jan. 9, 2020, https://orthodoxtimes.com/ecumenical-patriarch-to-patriarch-of-jerusalem-dont-persist-in-the-initiative-of-a-meeting/?utm_source=web&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=09-01-20_ecumenical&fbclid=IwAR3q1KFXOMUxioUB5xaqE9HNmr1uKyD3FyKNDYnjWBGjE62QBf1of6d-Pag; Olga Tsviliy, "Head of Fanar to Patriarch Theophilos: Don't Persist with Primates' Council," *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, Jan. 10, 2020, https://spzh.news/en/news/67717-glava-fanara-patriarkhu-feofilu-ne-nastaivajte-na-sovete-predstojatelej.

[134] See essay of Fr. George Maximov, "The Heresy of Constantinople Papism," *Orthodox Christianity*, Jan. 30, 2019, http://orthochristian.com/118982.html.

[135] Russian Orthodox Church, "Patriarch Krill: Papism Is Dangerous as It Is Much Easier to

the ecumenical patriarch are calling for a pan-Orthodox synod, but meanwhile the ecumenical prelate to convene such a synod is not in favor of doing so. On top of that, other patriarchs have now sided with Constantinople on the matter.[136] Nothing else could prove more clearly that a universal principle of unity requires the liberty to exercise certain sacred rights of jurisdiction in order to compel obedience and conformity on pain of sin. Otherwise, the bickering will continue to mount up and grow at exponential rates. In the address of Patriarch Kirill already referenced, his eminence had made the following argument:

> [P]apism is dangerous in that it is much easier to influence one individual than a group of people. A pope and a patriarch who wants to become the pope become a very attractive target to the powers that be, and an outside influence made on one individual may ruin the Church.[137]

This sort of argument is attempting to say that if the universal Church were under the authority of one single head, the chances of that head bringing disaster to the whole Church are far greater than if the Church is governed by a collegiality of leaders who are equal to each other and unequal only in honorific prestige. This Orthodox objection should not be ignored. What happens, for example, if the universal head, to whom belongs universal jurisdiction, becomes an unstoppable cancerous infection? Wouldn't that cancer multiply until it consumes and kills the entire body? Catholics have typically pointed to the strong tendency of both aristocratic and democratic forms of government, meaning power invested in groups or the whole of the people, to generate schisms and crystallized fragmentations that become irreparable. However, the hypothetical scenario of an all-powerful and unstoppable cancer as head of the whole body killing the entire body is just as theoretically possible and equally irreparable. However, there are fatal extremes to be found in the

Influence One Individual than a Group of People," *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*, Nov. 5, 2019, https://mospat.ru/en/2019/11/05/news179651/.

[136] See for example the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Archbishop of All-Greece, and the Archbishop of Cyprus. "Archbishop of Cyprus Commemorates Head of Ukrainian Schismatics without Synodal Consent," *Orthodox Christianity*, October 24, 2020, https://orthochristian.com/134829.html; "Patriarchate of Alexandria Recognizes Autocephalous Church of Ukraine," *Orthodox Times*, Nov. 8, 2019, https://orthodoxtimes.com/the-patriarchate-of-alexandria-recognizes-the-orthodox-church-of-ukraine/.

[137] Russian Orthodox Church, "Papism Is Dangerous as It Is Much Easier to Influence One Individual," *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations.*

worst-case scenarios in either papalism or conciliarism. In the former, the worst case would be a renegade pope which brings the whole Church down. The latter case is when splits continue to go on without a principle of unity to retain oneness and singularity. In both paradigms, the Holy Spirit is the only force prohibiting the absolute worst-case scenario.

It is for this reason that the Catholic believes that whatever authority the successor of St. Peter has, he is not authorized to do anything he would like, including that which would harm the whole body. He cannot change the Sacrament of Baptism such that it is no longer needed for salvation. He cannot dissolve a valid marriage bond between two spouses. He cannot write a new Bible and pull the current books out of commission. He cannot command people to commit theft. He cannot obliterate his own office by declaring the Chair of Peter non-existent. He cannot surrender the Catholic religion to become a sub-structure of Islam. The list could go on endlessly with what the pope *simply cannot do* because he lacks authorization for one reason or another.

Aside from the lack of authorization, it is part of Catholic teaching that the pope, when he faces the universal Church in order to bind it to a certain doctrinal content on faith or morals, is supernaturally protected from error by the power of God's providence. Thus, in the Catholic perspective, the cancer would never be able to reach the whole of the body. But this miraculous prevention remains in the hands of God's providence. As such, the Orthodox should be given the same courtesy in that, provided God's gracious protection, a plurality of equal hierarchs never amounts to an irreparable division such that the unity of the Orthodox world is destroyed.

Both the Orthodox and the Catholic, therefore, depend on the miracle of providence for their respective models of Church government to sustain the unity of the Church, and there is nothing in the model itself that would dictate the impossibility of a fatal destruction of said unity. Therefore, a legitimate point is made from both sides. For the Catholic, God accommodated to the natural mode of human reason and sense experience. Monarchy, one that is orchestrated by God, is the best form of government as it is the most conducive to peace and unity amidst dissensions.[138] The power to unify must involve the power to command and

[138] I here depend greatly on the arguments in the first chapters of St. Robert Bellarmine's *On the Roman Pontiff*. To be clear, St. Bellarmine says that the Church's ideal government is a monarchy *mixed* with aristocratic and democratic elements. Underneath the monarch (i.e., the pope) there is the college of bishops, and underneath the college of bishops are the people of God, who choose who is worthy to occupy the hierarchical offices.

bind consciences, otherwise dissent, and therefore division, is allowed to feign legitimacy. Historical events may serve as a help in determining how the Catholic and Orthodox paradigms of authority come to materialize.

Once again, the Council of Crete (2016) serves as an illustration. Metropolitan Timothy Ware recounted how, despite the effort to make the council pan-Orthodox in status, not all fourteen autocephalous churches sent delegates.[139] As a result, Ware concludes that "we cannot actually say that this meeting was pan-Orthodox."[140] Interestingly, Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis claims that, even though Antioch, Russia, Bulgaria, and Georgia at the last minute refused to attend the Council of Crete, the council remains firmly binding on the universal Orthodox Church in light of their initial commitment to attend as well as their agreement with the previewed content ordered to be discussed.[141] The Antiochene patriarchate denies it has any binding force.[142] The Moscow patriarchate released the following statement:

> This Council cannot be viewed as Ecumenical, and the decisions taken at it cannot be viewed as binding for the entire Orthodox Church since in the absence of the agreement of a number of Local autocephalous Orthodox Churches on holding the Council at a time early agreed upon the principle of consensus was violated.[143]

Interestingly, this attempt at a pan-Orthodox council, both the convocation and the question of the binding nature of its decrees *ex post facto*, is a matter of dispute, and that seems to correspond to the above-described defect on the part of Orthodox ecclesiology in relation to councils. The

[139] "Metropolitan Timothy Reflects on Orthodox Council," *Orthodox Christian Laity*, July 26, 2016, https://ocl.org/metropolitan-kallistos-reflects-orthodox-council/.

[140] "Metropolitan Kallistos Reflects on Orthodox Council," *Orthodox Christian Laity*.

[141] The Ecumenical Patriarchate, "Many Questions, Simple Answers—Ecumenical Patriarchate Press Office," *Ecumenical Patriarchate*, *YouTube*, June 16, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyPOpuN8ZJA; John L. Allen Jr., "With or Without Russia, Spokesman Says Orthodox Council Is 'Binding,'" *Crux*, June 15, 2016, https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2016/06/without-russia-spokesman-says-orthodox-council-binding/.

[142] "Statement of the Secretariat of the Holy Synod of Antioch," *Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East*, June 27, 2016, https://www.antiochpatriarchate.org/en/page/statement-of-the-secretariat-of-the-holy-synod-of-antioch-balamand-27-june-2016/1448/.

[143] "Resolutions of the Holy Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (29th November–2nd December 2017)," *The Russian Orthodox Church Department for External Church Relations*, Feb. 12, 2017, https://mospat.ru/en/2017/12/02/news153781/.

other major defect is the glaring insistence from the first millennium that the See of Rome would have to take presidency over ecumenical councils. Again, the Orthodox can argue that the See of Constantinople takes over this role, but it would simply devolve back into the question of what made Elder Rome qualified to preside at councils in the first place? The evidence provided shows the Petrine-Roman constitution as the ground for this prerogative, whereas the See of Constantinople cannot pretend to have anything of the sort. This makes for a serious inconsistency. This redrawing of primacy and ecclesiology falls into what the late Fr. Ray Ryland calls a process of *reconstructionism*. I have already claimed that the Orthodox Church has had to edit the Petrine office of Rome out from the Church's DNA, and so this left in place a gap into which a reconstruction has to be built. That reconstruction is conciliarism. Under this new model, the Orthodox have not held a tribunal at which to officially condemn the Catholic West for any of the major issues causing the division: the use of unleavened bread, *Filioque*, purgatory, divine simplicity, and the papacy. Quoting the late Orthodox canon law specialist, Hamilcar Alivisatos, Fr. Ryland states: "Our Church has never spoken officially, nor made any decree in a synod about the dogmatic position either of the Papal Church, nor of the Protestant Churches."[144] This is significant since not only will it take an ecumenical council to officially condemn the Catholic Church in order to explain the Orthodox Church's separation, but it would take the same in order to heal that schism.

The Catholic Church's dogmatization of the papacy over the centuries leading up to the First Vatican Council is, admittedly, a complex development which can appear to include certain novelties, but that substance of the Petrinological DNA, mixed with the scriptural and patristic gloss on the authority of the keys, is only further elucidated in order to speak to the Church's confrontation with the unfolding drama of time and history. The resources with which to maintain outward and visible unity for the Church of Christ has been maintained by, among other things, the insistence of the divinely appointed position of the head of the Church. In all my research on first and second millennium history, most notably from Protestant and Orthodox perspectives, a denial of the office of a universal head possessed of jurisdiction and dogmatic infallibility almost always comes with a logical implication of ecclesial divisibility.

Perhaps one of my favorite books on the subject of the papacy in

[144] Hamilcar Alivisatos, "Is It Possible to Convoke an Ecumenical Council?" *Diakonia* 4.1 (1969): 20, quoted in *Draw from the Shadows into Truth: A Memoir*, by Ray Ryland (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2013), 187.

the first millennium is *The Church Universal and the See of Rome* by the Anglican Henry E. Symonds, whose commentary and analysis come very close to mine, and yet in his final conclusion he admits, along with Edward Denny and Frederick W. Puller, that the apostolic episcopate is broken into pieces between Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxies, Roman Catholicism, and Anglicanism. The only way back to unity is through a spontaneously reached agreement and solidarity from all the pieces coming back together, and not by way of submitting to one authoritative head as a necessary principle of unity. Because equal authority is invested in each of the pieces, a reintegration of unity will depend on the miraculous cooperation of each piece of the episcopate until it returns to the whole singularity that it was during the apostolic era. For Anglican branch theorists, the visible unity of the Catholic Church is null and void, and the church can only strive for it. Symonds realizes that denying the proper jurisdiction and dogmatic infallibility of the Apostolic See comes with the cost of denying the visible unity of the Church.

Now, the Orthodox cannot venture into branch theories but must profess the Church's visible unity as one of the marks of the Church as stated in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (*one*, holy, catholic, and apostolic). At present, the Orthodox Church lacks a dogmatic decree justifying its severance from Rome, and the only hopes of achieving a council that can justify its exclusion from Rome, as well as unify its own bodies into one, is through the power of an ecumenical council. But for the reasons described, it is this very thing that appears to be always too far from the grasp of Orthodox hierarchs.

# Concluding Reflection

As stated in the introduction, the Orthodox and Catholic churches both share in the belief that the Lord Jesus Christ, when he stood in the flesh before the eyes of men, spoke with the supreme authority of God. The voice of God the Father spoke from heaven upon Christ and said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matt 17:5). Therefore, whatever he preached and taught deserves to be regarded as the infallible and binding "*words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). His doctrine is to be obeyed as God's words, or else one faces eternal ruin (Matt 7:26–27). It was this authority, made certain by God as the confirmer, that makes the message of Christ absolute and without the possibility of error. Although not described in quite the same epistemological way and still less with the same unanimity, Catholic and Orthodox theologians understand that Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, bestowed upon his Church a certain share in his own infallible authority to carry out the mission he gave to the apostolic witnesses. Indeed, although he was to become visibly withdrawn from the world to reign on his throne at the right hand of God, he promised that his Church, by means of being solidified through the strength of the *rock of St. Peter*, would never be prevailed over by the gates of hell, meaning, the Church is protected from *apostatizing from the truth*. As such, the Church of Christ cannot ever fail in its mission by misleading her members into the path of heresy which leads to the ruin of souls. And this protection is guaranteed through this Petrine architecture. This is the basic logic undergirding the concept of ecclesiastical infallibility.

Because the content of the Christian faith depends so much on this authority to speak in Christ's name, such that whoever hears the Church hears Christ, or that whatever the Church binds on earth is bound in heaven, knowing what *the Church is* becomes a most important question. Catholics and Orthodox have no issue in identifying the Apostolic College as the original bearer of this authority. Moreover, both agree that the episcopate, succeeding the apostolic ministry, carries on the apostolic authority given by Christ to preach the Gospel, administer the holy sacraments, and pastorally govern the earthly Body of Christ. However, the

crux of the division between Catholics and Orthodox is over the issue of which side represents the true episcopate of Christ and thus is the true carrier of Christ's infallible authority. I proposed that such a debate should be revisited by a reexamination of the sources of divine Revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures and the Sacred Tradition, as well as the evidence found in historical antiquity throughout the era of ecumenical councils until the symbolic date of 1054. This book, I hope, achieved getting English readers to understand the history and the rationale of both sides in this heart-wrenching schism.

Toward the beginning of the book, it was well documented that many of the best historians have come to see that the current day schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches came not as the result of some unforeseen error that abruptly showed itself at a particular point resulting in a sudden and definitive one-time break in the eleventh century. Rather there was, among other things, a gradual development of (at least) two distinct ecclesiologies between the East and West, *even to be seen whilst* they were in open and happy communion with one another. Some even assert that this divergence stretches as far back as the late second century. The late Fr. Yves Congar confidently refers to this divergence while in communion as a *modus vivendi*, or a will to tolerate one another despite their differences. We saw how the historian Duchesne counted a cumulative amount of just over two hundred years (nearly half the time) between the fourth and seventh centuries where Rome and the East were excommunicated from each other. Surely, the seeds of disagreement were already there to be seen from early on. As troubling as this claim might sound for a contemporary Catholic or Orthodox Christian, the explorations conducted in the above chapters clearly show at least some divergence between the East and West even while they were in communion.

Assuming the seeker of truth is still convinced that there is such a thing as "one true visible Church," the above facts force him to choose which side amongst the competitors has a more compelling case. There are certainly voices that vigorously defend the existence and exercise of divine papal authority just as there are voices that contradict the basic foundations of that authority. But, as was belabored in the chapters of this book, just because there was a measure of disunity on the rights of the papacy in the early centuries of the Church does not mean that the case for the papal claims is thereby proven false. It would just mean that, like many other doctrines that suffered from nuanced opposition, such as the deity and manhood of Jesus Christ, or that of the lawful veneration of

images of Christ and the saints, or the precise relationship between grace and salutary good works, or the precise nature of Christ's dual energies and wills, *so also the precise rights and privileges of St. Peter's office would undergo its own fair share of tense and enduring development.* And one should expect more, if not the same amount, of debating back-and-forth as these other controversies just listed, especially when the subject of debate is authority and who has it. There is always a temptation to find checks and balances to authority that inheres in human subjects, and thus it is even more reasonable that the papal position would have its fair share of contest.

Even so, aside from the anti-papal outcries from this or that corner of the patristic era, extremely significant voices from the same era, reaching from both Latin West and Greek East, accepted both the theory and function of the papal office in such a sufficient manner that it can be argued that the papacy is rooted in the divine blueprints Christ made for the Church.

This is extremely significant since some Orthodox will object to Catholicism and the papacy by saying "yes" to a high level of official primacy, "but not to the level of Vatican I." This is a recurring objection. Such a distinction might be helpful, but it certainly does not help the Orthodox position if the patristic voices cry out in favor of a divinely instituted (and therefore divinely irreversible) papal office[1] when the Orthodox Church has, whether rightly or wrongly, reduced the office of ecclesiastical primacy to far below the minimum that the patristic patrimony allows. In other words, while the patristic voices might not be as explicit on the papacy as the *Pastor Aeternus* (1870), they at least testify a kind of primacy which is still, at its most irreducible minimum, essential to the Church's constitutional government and something inextricably rooted in the conferring of authority from the Lord Jesus to the Apostle Peter and permanently stationed in the Roman bishopric. This Roman-Petrine architecture is essentially embedded into the divine blueprints of the Church, as testified by the Fathers and councils surveyed in the above chapters. The Orthodox, however, have not only maintained an ecclesiology that sees the Petrine-Roman institution as having been excluded from functioning status, reducing it to the level of it being nonessential to the Church for going on nearly one thousand years now, but have also called into question the Petrine nature of that primacy.

[1] And here is meant the divinely instituted primacy permanently stationed in the Roman bishopric, precluding any transferability to other patriarchates or churches.

At the end of the day, the preponderance of the evidence on this matter strongly supports the Catholic doctrine of ecclesiology and primacy. The voices that have been surveyed of all the saints and doctors of the Church, in both East and West, are at some pains to be harmonized with the contemporary Orthodox beliefs, especially those contained in encyclicals of the nineteenth century (1848–1895).[2] Those voices were not merely spoken into the vast emptiness of private opinion or in the leisure of one's own biblical commentary but rather during times which called for sober decision-making such as public scandals to the apostolic faith or in the proper adjudication of heretics and the orthodox. As was witnessed from the mid-fourth century, "major cases" were brought to the court of the Apostolic See for decisions that carried both authority (*auctoritas*) and power (*potestas*), as canons three through five of Sardica (343) make clear. Most of all, these voices are recorded in the official *Acts* of the ecumenical councils, effectively making their testimonies consubstantial with the highest venue of authority for the Orthodox. Considering how precious and infallible every last word of the *Acts* of councils was held by so many,[3] the amount of space given in the *Acts* to the papal claims has surely entered them into the bloodstream of whichever church is the Church of the Seven Great Councils and thus serves as an irreversible marker of Christ's Church. In the investigation provided, the data seems to tip the scales by a few milligrams toward the Catholic perspective on the papal office. I will explain why I say only "milligrams" further below.

It is no wonder then how even Protestant and Orthodox scholars have admitted that the Eastern episcopate *at least* outwardly accepted the claims being made by the Apostolic See of Rome when she thought it was profitable to do so, even, as some scholars speculate, if she did not give internal assent nor literal belief to those claims. I happen to think a great deal of the Eastern saints were well informed about the Roman protocol of authority and jurisdiction. Ceaselessly speculating as to the interior perspective of the East seems to imply the vice of dishonesty, and such speculations are irrelevant to the transactions that occurred between the papacy and the East in the first millennium. A *modus vivendi* of divergently held systems of ecclesiology there may

[2] The ecumenical agreements reached at Ravenna (2007) and Chieti (2016) mark some major progress but only to the point of admitting a universal office of primacy but not its nature or founding principles.

[3] Just see how sensitive the Fathers were on the momentary acceptance of the Letter of Ibas referred to in the tenth session of Chalcedon.

have been, but the terms and conditions that were written with ink and stood face-up on the tables from which public decisions were put into effect almost always favored the Roman narrative, at least in theory if not also in practice. This was seen in the Formula of Hormisdas, the doctrinal Tomes sent by Popes St. Leo, St. Agatho, and Hadrian I, and finally the letters of Pope Hadrian II that were officially left in the *Acts* of the Council of Constantinople (879) under the supervision of Photius himself. In these examples, the bishops each gave their approval. Even some contemporary attempts by Orthodox writers that concede to a universal Roman primacy of jurisdiction akin to the jurisdiction of an archbishop or patriarch over the Churches of his region do not adequately resemble the claims in the aforementioned references.

Despite the above, there is still criteria of falsification that would disprove the papacy and therefore Catholicism. And here is explained why, if Catholicism wins the debates, it is by milligrams and not a landslide. If it could ever be shown, as St. John H. Newman admitted, that the magisterium of the Catholic Church has contradicted itself in the solemn pronouncements on faith or morals, then everything written in this book, or in any book, in defense of Catholicism would immediately shatter to pieces.[4] And to be both honest and fair, I have surveyed at least two major instances that the Orthodox can choose that would make a big problem for Catholics, namely, the events surrounding both Pope Honorius and Pope Vigilius, especially their seeming subjection to the authority of ecumenical councils.[5] In particular, the Fifth Council, as I noted in the relevant chapter, comes very close to favoring some kind of conciliarism over papalism by its eighth session, rejecting that one person, the pope in particular, can determine the faith of the whole Church by his own individual decrees. On the contrary, they look to the Apostles and the Fathers and see the tradition, which says that final decisions must be made altogether with the brethren in councils.[6]

There is this, and there is also the hypothetical situation that the

[4] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878), 121.

[5] Honorius is slightly disqualified from this since he was posthumously condemned by the authority of his successor, Pope St. Leo II, who ratified the council which had officiated the sentence.

[6] In the relevant chapter on Pope Vigilius and Constantinople (553), I rely on the fact that the council's convocation and active proceedings were tarnished by the illegality of Caesaropapism and the fact that it broke the rule of requiring the authority and cooperation of the Apostolic See. The facts seem to suggest that the actions of this council do not pose a substantial refutation of the papal claims. However, to the extent one rationally disagrees with

Orthodox can pose about what happens when the pope himself becomes a source of disunity? I have provided my reflections on this, but I must be candid in saying the Orthodox have many solid punches that land clean in this debate over primacy. This calls to mind the relatively simple yet profound criticisms leveled against papal infallibility by the late French Cistercian monk who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy from Catholicism, Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) Simonopetritis, in his *Stages of a Pilgrimage*. On the sentence of the Sixth Council against Honorius, he wrote: "In any case, a similar condemnation of a pope would be unthinkable today. One must thus admit that there has been an evolution."[7] Who can deny the force of that? On top of this, each and every time the pope was suspected of being guilty of heresy in the first millennium, even the bishops of the West, not to mention the East, felt no anxiety over removing the pope's name from the diptychs of communion.[8] Could we picture something like this happening today?[9] What these actions show is that sizable portions of the Church were not convinced of an invincible rule that one had to be in communion with the pope of Rome for their eternal salvation. Otherwise, they would have avoided severance from unity with the Apostolic See just like one would avoid denying the name of Christ before his persecutors. And with that single element gone, potentially the whole doctrine of the papacy is ground to powder. We also saw the peculiar case of St. Maximus the Confessor who originally pressed hard on the *a priori* infallibility of Rome, but when pushed under trial, perhaps against his will, he seems to indicate that he was willing to sever his unity with the See of Rome if the latter caved in to union with heretics.

These are powerful points to consider, and Catholics should not wave them off. On the other hand, the Orthodox might have good points to make on Vigilius and Honorius but then there is an issue with their wholesale rejection of something their Fathers and saints held to be

---

that, the criticisms against the papacy that are made available by the evidence of this council can be considered, at some level, as counter evidence.

[7] Archimandrite Placide, "Stages of a Pilgrimage," in *The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain*, ed. Hieromonk Alexander Golitzin (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary, 1996), 81.

[8] The examples in mind are Pope Vigilius, who was "excommunicated" by both the Eastern Bishops of Constantinople (553) and the major Western sees, and Pope Honorius who was condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council. The reader should be aware, however, that those Western bishops who severed communion with Rome during the Three Chapters controversy were also rejecting the Council of Constantinople (553) and later repented of their errors. It must not be thought they were in the right in severing communion with Rome.

[9] Perhaps further light on this will be shed when the Church looks more upon what to do in the case of an overtly heretical pope.

traditional orthodoxy, namely, the *essential* Petrine-Roman constitution of universal primacy. Having to reconcile the papal failures of the past with papal infallibility is far more explainable than having explain a complete discontinuity. Another way of putting it is this: while there may be some suspicious tweaks that are required to show continuity between *Pastor Aeternus* and the situation of Honorius and Vigilius, it appears to be less straining than the amount required to show continuity in Eastern Orthodoxy when it is clear they have completely diminished all the premises which upheld the universal Petrine primacy that they, in the person of their ancestors, so vigorously upheld in the most solemn occasions. One might argue that while the Catholic has the difficult task of showing continuity between papal failures and *Pastor Aeternus*, the Orthodox has the *even more* difficult task of explaining a clear break in continuity, such that what was once held solemnly is now discarded.

Two clear examples of this are the solemn acceptance of Pope St. Agatho's letter by the Sixth Ecumenical Council and the Church-wide acceptance of the Formula of Hormisdas. Both of these documents, duly accepted by the East, represent the Petrine-Roman primacy as both divine in its creation and etched into the essential architecture of the Church. Honorius and Vigilius may have crossed the line, but the Fathers never thought their mistakes ever showed that the Church of Christ can withdraw from its divinely instituted organs such as the primacy of the Apostolic See of St. Peter. Perhaps the Apostolic See could have a wayward occupant, but that doesn't entail that the Church is free to dispense from its institutional place in the Church's government. The Orthodox Church, however, has removed itself from unity with the Apostolic See and has taught an ecclesiology where the primacy of Rome has no essential place to necessarily remain.

But let us, for a moment, entertain the scenario where Orthodoxy wins the historical argument. This "victory" still does not go down without leaving serious collateral damage. As I currently see it, if I were ever to come to the conviction that the Catholic doctrine of the papacy was simply a false construction put together by men, I would have to conclude that the Fathers and councils that bear witness to the papacy were precisely the subjects who were led into falsehood. A falsification of the papacy would strike enough damage to the patristic credibility itself that this same damage would decommission the Fathers and councils from holding any significant authority in the first place. In other words, if those Holy Fathers, councils, and celebrated Formulas of Union, all which pronounce on the clear divinity of the Petrine commission of

Rome, were to be shown false by an eventual apostasy (and therefore decommissioning) by Rome, then that would also harm the credibility of said Fathers, councils, and Formulas of Union. And since these data objects are consubstantial with the patristic sources, the credibility of the latter is impugned. Consequently, the tradition of the Fathers would no longer be a trustworthy source by which to lead one to the one true Church of Jesus Christ since so much of those Fathers indicate the veracity of the papacy.

Shortly put, a falsified papacy hurts the sources of Eastern Orthodoxy. The available history of the Church would no longer be a reliable compass with which to navigate the waters of Christian pluralism let alone point the way to *the* Truth. Moreover, trying to reconstruct the true Church today from the patristic sources as interpreted through a contemporary Orthodox lens surely requires cleaning off so much of what before was well accepted by the Latin Fathers, at the very least, thereby running into the very same falsification criteria through a violation of the *consensus partum*.[10] As such, if the papacy is today successfully proven to be a falsehood, then the credibility of the patristic testimony takes a massive hit with it, and one might then look to other sources for reconstructing the Christian religion from near scratch, a task taken up by the Protestant Reformers. But both Catholics and Orthodox believe in the words of the Lord who promised this would never happen since "*gates of hell shall never prevail against*" the Church.

Under this scheme, the Fathers and councils become fallible guides but not foundationally definitive for Christian faith. When the Church's Tradition is reduced to this kind of experiment, the patristic and conciliar witness can be called into question, and this is when groups splinter into schisms. On the contrary, Catholicism holds that Christ established a visible Church with a visible head whose function is to maintain the visible unity through an outstanding position of authority over the whole Church. For the Orthodox to admit partially to such a construction, only then to accept that the headship itself is open to a complete decommission (as they understand has happened with the Apostolic See of Rome), or to be attributed to any head of an ecclesiastical synod, movable and transferable by circumstance, the visible unity of the Church

[10] The exception to this would be for one to make a case that the contemporary Orthodox Church is the faithful continuation of the tradition on ecclesiology and primacy in the first millennium, or that it can argue for itself to be in continuity with a least the most well supported strand of a tradition claiming to go back to the Apostles and transmitted throughout history unto the present day.

can become open to diminution. This has led significant thinkers, such as were described in the chapter on the Slavophile Alexei Khomyakov, to reassess Christian epistemology on doctrine and unity by relegating visible governing structure away from the center of protecting the certainty of faith, since the truth is both known and verified internally, with no need for a visible criterion. This position was also evidenced in the writings of Fr. John Meyendorff, and many other contemporary Orthodox theologians. What then is left of procuring the visible unity requisite for both the strong and weak in faith to know with certainty where the true Church is?

Incidentally, while I was writing this book, I was also reading through Philip Jenkins's *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* (2011). This book details how Christian unity had been a struggle since the beginning, and that there were massive schisms already in the fifth century between East and West, many of which remain today. Without a unifying principle, deciding which breakaway was justified in its schism is simply impossible to do. Modern scholars and most "so-called" neutral inquirers enter the vast expanse of Church history and try to force themselves to avoid discerning which ecclesial group, amongst a plurality of contenders, carried the whole and true counsel of God. Nearly all the groups and sects claimed they were the ones who had the truth. Jenkins, who merely follows the logical inferences already made by the anti-papalists Edward Denny and F. W. Puller, admits that since the time the "apostles left Jerusalem, at no point in Christian history has one single church plausibly claimed the loyalty of all believers to the exclusion of rival institutions."[11] So here you have the opinions of many competitors, and the "neutral" scholar must then sift through all their merits. The task can be as daunting as setting out to build a hobby ship with four hundred fifty thousand pieces, following an instruction manual that is fifty volumes, each a thousand pages, containing an innumerable number of contradictions and incomplete instructions. If one were to be 100 percent neutral in his or her research, the historical literature amounts to a broken compass that will point south as many times at it will point north when held still in the same spot.

Here we should spare ourselves the illusion that there was one clearly visible church until 1054. Besides the Greek and Latin schism, you have

[11] Philip Jenkins, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 12.

the Oriental Orthodox churches that trace their own lineage back to the first century but find themselves broken from both the Latin and the Byzantine communions (i.e., the churches of the Roman Empire), as well as the Assyrian church of the East, which also claims apostolic succession but shares no communion with either the Oriental Orthodox, the Eastern Orthodox, or the Roman church. Besides these four great bodies that broke apart before the fifth century was over, there were always other rival competitors for being Christ's true episcopate. This leads Jenkins to conclude what I found to be extremely informative:

> [A] denominationally divided world is not an exceptional circumstance for Christians, but the conventional norm. Dilemmas of interchurch conflict and cooperation go back literally to the foundations of the faith. . . . Already by 550, Christendom was quite as divided as it would be during the great early-modern split between Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox.[12]

For the neutral observer, such a reality can lead one to question whether Christian epistemology, historically speaking, ever really did have a unanimous principle or visible criterion. Quite literally, one could say that the principle of unity between these warring episcopates, not to mention the other schismatic bodies that always existed in smaller sizes, is everyone's *private interpretation* of Scripture and Tradition. After all, even St. Vincent de Lérins offers to the individual believer the "right" to simply investigate the sources for himself after using a few useful tests to ascertain the true Church's mind on any given question. He entertains the possibility that most of the living Church is sunk with errors and then says the individual can dive into antiquity himself to find the *real truth*. One might argue that St. Vincent points his readers to the objective tests of Scripture, Tradition, and the *consensus partum*, but it still remains that there will be, and has been, competing interpretations of all three of those objects.

Nevertheless, both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches put much stock into the authority of councils. Jenkins himself recognizes that the common method resorted to during the patristic era was to convoke councils in order to capture the "Church's mind," referring to Christ's word, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I

[12] Jenkins, *Jesus Wars*, 12–13. This goes further than the disparity recorded by Duchesne.

in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). The mind of the Church is the mind of the Christ who indwells the Church through the Holy Spirit. This, as it were, was the way in which many Christians thought God would reveal his intentions to the members of the true Church, and thus everyone will know the truth by successful councils.[13] But by what measure is a council successful?

As repeatedly reported in the previous chapters, councils all had their rivals and their dissenters. Jenkins is certainly spot-on when he notes that the early councils were "generally chaotic," where "respective parties mobilized large numbers of their own followers, while disqualifying rival delegations . . . [and] if a council voted in a particular way, dissidents were quite capable of establishing a rival minority council of their own, voting as they thought fit and sending that decision *to the emperor for approval*."[14] It is no wonder, then, that many historians have gone on record believing that it was emperors who decided the faith of Christians. This is actually a gross misrepresentation, but one can certainly sympathize with that takeaway.

From this point of view, one might say "the final decisions were *the emperors*."[15] And if it was the secular powers that determined the Church's beliefs, as Jenkins' book title gives away, then we can hardly perceive these decisions as divinely infallible ones. They may have been correct, but this view holds nothing *a priori* infallible about them. When and if one looks to the raw history, this is all they might see. It is no wonder, then, that doctrines such as the essential visible unity of the Church, apostolic succession, and ecclesial infallibility were all seen to be "fantasies" by the searing critiques of historical criticism in liberal Protestant scholarship. The raw historical events do not seem to make for smooth mathematics that add up to these dogmatic axioms held by men of old. As the saying goes, "hindsight is 20/20." When we are given the ability to look back and see all the places where our ancestors made clear mistakes, we can claim to "know better" in the present than did they in the past.

Quite honestly, if these brute facts give us the full picture of history, then we do not really have a solid map to follow from Christian patristics. One could say that a completely unbiased study of Church history could only yield, at best, a probability of what might be true amidst several or more competing rival claimants. And that from a genius historian, only.

[13] Jenkins, *Jesus Wars*, 19–24.

[14] Jenkins, *Jesus Wars*, 24 (emphasis added).

[15] Jenkins, *Jesus Wars*, 24 (emphasis added).

Some of the most intelligent and well-studied scholars of Christian history simply think that all these structures, such as apostolic succession, the visible doctrine of the Church, the infallibility of the episcopal college, the papacy, ecumenical councils, canonical law, and even the Holy Scriptures, were temporary structures, however good, artificially made to keep Christianity floating during unique times but must not been seen as immovable and irreversibly infallible. In fact, while these structures may have aided the Christians in the past, if and when they no longer seemed to help Christians but rather served to eat away at the essence of Christianity, they can be wholly dispensed with. This is basic framework of Protestant ecclesiology.[16] One can scarcely imagine how Christianity can stay on two feet, let alone one foot, with an epistemological framework such as that.

The above observations should cause one to reevaluate just how one might reasonably maintain the historic principles of Church unity, as the creed states quite plainly as an essential mark, through both an *a priori* logical argument and the aid of coherence tests. What kind of ecclesiology can successfully produce a permanent ecclesial unity, followed by which historical ecclesiology has sufficient pedigree from historical testimonies that testify to itself? What kind of ecclesiological structure can see to it that Christ's prayer that "they all may be one" (John 17:21) actually materializes. As for the *a priori* inference, there is the bestowal of Christ's own authority upon his Apostles and, by way of continuation, the whole Church represented in its leadership, that is, the episcopate. Having once ruled as the infallible Shepherd when he was visible in the flesh, upon his ascension, "Christ has authorized a regency, so that the decisions of the regency are clothed with the authority of the heavenly King."[17]

Once again, we are back to the question of authority. But how can Christ the King establish a regency if the members of the Church's society are capable of devolving into never-ending bickering with no

[16] For a basic testimony in defense of this, see Rupert Davis, *Why I Am a Protestant* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017); Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018). For critiques of this paradigm, see Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017); Louis Bouyer, *The Word, Church, and Sacrament: In Protestantism and Catholicism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004); Francis De Sales, *The Catholic Controversy* (Charlotte: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1986); B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church* (London: Helicon Press, 1962); B. C. Butler, *The Church and Unity: An Essay* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1979).

[17] B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church*, 46.

principled machinery to guarantee unifying decisions that welcome no further questioning or dissent? By establishing a permanent visible head of the Church's government in St. Peter, one whose primacy is possessed of coercive jurisdiction and unchallengeable doctrinal authority, there is then a rationally identifiable method that ensures the episcopate might remain one and undivided until the end of time.

Now, if this methodology were borne simply by an *a posteriori* human reasoning, a sort of human construct to manufacture unity so as to cleverly avoid the dilemma of disunity, then it would not carry enough weight to persuade Christians who faithfully uphold only what is contained in divine Revelation. Just because a method is intellectually satisfying to the human mind does not save it from being a mere human construct. Only by showing how this method accords with divine Revelation itself can it be adorned with divine credibility.

However, a Catholic would simply point to an intersection between what rationally provides societal unity (a fixed and visible authority) and divine Revelation's testimony to the Petrinological architecture in the Church of Christ. The Catholic argues this architecture was established by Christ in the Matthean *Tu es Petrus* (Matt 16:18–19), the Johannine pastoral commission (John 21:15–17), and the Lukan promise of Petrine indefectibility (Luke 22:32). This, it is argued, puts St. Peter as the chief head, the keeper of the keys, the pastor of the Lord's sheep, and confirmer of the faith of the brethren. As I think the chapters of this book demonstrate, this Petrine primacy unfolds into the Petrine-Roman institution and can be shown, through sufficient evidence, as a major doctrine of the Fathers and councils, albeit not "beyond shadow of doubt."[18] It is in

[18] It is worth mentioning that since the Fathers and councils of the universal Church in the first millennium understood papal supremacy to be founded by Christ in St. Peter as recorded in the Gospels, the rejection of said supremacy by the contemporary Orthodox Church would consist in accepting that what God at one time established to exist by divine order as essential to the Church is now no longer the case. This yields a logical dilemma. If the papacy was understood to be divinely instituted and organically tied to the nature of the Church, then a later rejection of it would imply that the very nature of the Church has been diminished and she is no longer what the Lord founded her to be. An ecclesiology that accepts such an organic and natural change from what the Church was when it was founded opens the door to accepting the possibility of doctrine and the Apostolic Tradition changing or diminishing through time, something neither Catholic nor Orthodox ecclesiology is theoretically open to. Thus, the Orthodox, it seems, are bound to argue that the papacy is of human or ecclesiastical institution, and thus can be assigned to the Church or removed from the Church without subtracting from the essence of the Church. But by doing so, the Orthodox begin to deviate from the clarity of the Church Fathers on the matter, as the chapters of this book demonstrate.

this visible structure, the *singular* throne of St. Peter, a throne in which, as St. Optatus of Milevis so clearly testified, "unity is to be preserved by all," and from which all who sever themselves are clearly schismatic, that is acclaimed to be the Church's immovable rock and bond of unity.[19]

Now, while this ideology may have had a fair share of contest by not a few ecclesiastical characters, even famous ones, it cannot be denied that it is both rooted in Scripture and finds itself wading through all the centuries of the Church going forward. If there ever were going to be a methodology that could practically sustain the Church in her essential unity, it would be this one. So, while there is ample documentation of how many bishops and councils, in both East and West, really didn't think the judgment of the pope of Rome to be absolute and infallible, many of these same persons didn't attribute absolute and infallible authority to anything but the Scripture or their own perception of Tradition, and sometimes the "Church's mind," if that was at all discernable.

Effectively, those who contested papal authority often enough had to resort to self-referential methods of discerning what the mind of Christ the King truly was, and this was doubtlessly a recipe for high volumes of bickering and disunity. And yet the Roman claims were still always there, and they were augmented throughout the centuries as being a sure help to the Church in her most desperate times. As the historian Fr. Klaus Schatz noted, the teaching promulgated at the First Vatican Council on papal primacy, while being perhaps only "one particular line of tradition" amidst other theories of Church government, can nevertheless "can be traced back to late antiquity."[20]

Another prominent historian, Steven Weidenkopf, also describes this pedigree aright: "Although the exercise of that primacy would evolve over time, 'it is one of the undeniable features of primitive church history.'"[21]

[19] Eastern and Oriental ecclesiologies embraced the basic logic of the Petrine architecture, primarily on regional and local levels. The patriarch and metropolitan are the figures of Peter, or the local bishop is a figure of Peter, all of which show forth the visible unity through sacral authority over subjects. However, because no one station of Peter is immovable, and since circumstances of heresy, schism, or apostasy can abrogate any one Petrine station from its commission, the locus of Petrine unity is open to shift by circumstance. This leads to the possibility of replacing the visible principle of unity by different interpreters, thereby seemingly abrogating the very purpose of having the Petrine architecture to begin with. Catholicism offers the theory that the Petrine throne must be preserved from heresy, schism, and apostasy, so as to never have an open door to this reformatting of the principle of unity to diverse forms.

[20] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 176.

[21] Steven Weidenkopf, *The Real Story of Catholic History: Answering Twenty Centuries of*

Indeed, a feature that cannot be simply dispensed with while also posing no harm to history's credibility, and thereby situating one in a more Protestant or liberal modernist mentality. From the historical survey provided, it is also extremely unlikely that the Fathers and councils of the Church were painting a mere theologoumenon that took leverage from a certain legendary story about St. Peter, nor that all the testimonies could be adequately explained through the typical habit of Byzantine flattery. Those explanations simply do not carry enough explanatory power.

Therefore, whatever else might be said of the papal claims, no one can really be taken seriously if they deny that such claims were there in Church history since the beginning. And so, while it was emperors, kings, and queens who were responsible for the many directions that the Church took as far as councils and doctrines are concerned, it was never without the Petrine protocol working side by side to hold it all to account. It is without surprise, then, that the Latin West grew to see the pope as carrying more and more responsibilities in the convocation of councils and the enforcement of their decrees and canons, while the Eastern Churches continued to rely on the imperial structure for the maintenance of councils.

Ironically, it was St. Maximus the Confessor and monk who testified against the backdrop of an overly imperializing Church that the Body of Christ must be free and sufficiently equipped to govern herself.[22] The concept of the Church's supreme and sacred rights over state and the secular was far more prominent in Western Europe where the papacy was gradually the power center of Christendom. With the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Eastern Orthodox Churches have had to reassess its internal capacity to hold something like the ecumenical councils of old, and further how the decrees of what are called pan-Orthodox synods might be enforced as unquestionably authoritative. Any Byzantologist who has studied the ecumenical councils knows that what is lacking today is the Roman emperor to call, convene, and legally confirm an ecumenical council. But this schematic is more than fossilized. It is far too deep in the ground to dig out. What is left is the program of regional synods and hopes for pan-Orthodox unity.[23] Some Orthodox

---

*Anti-Catholic Myths* (El Cajon, CA: Catholic Answers Press, 2017), 226. The author quotes from *A History of the Church*, vol. 2, *The Church and the World the Church Created*, by Philip Hughes (London: Sheed and Ward, 1993), 29.

[22] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 120.

[23] Rev. A. A. Martin Jugie, *Will Union Be Easy for the Orientals?* (Graymoor, NY: Chair of

theologians are more convinced than others that this is all straightforward, but hardly anyone can rationally deny that structural unity in contemporary Orthodoxy has been a harsh challenge for her members. Other theologians recognize that the Orthodox Church desperately needs something like a universal Petrine configuration with some kind of jurisdiction and capacity for jurisdictional initiatives.

Even so, the idea that the Church's visible unity depends on something like a Petrine configuration of ecclesiastical primacy is more than well supported by reason and the holy sources of Christian Tradition.[24] It may be the only organ available to perpetuate a workable unity and apostolicity. The alternative methods, as I have argued, presuppose a certain weakness of the historical record to serve as a reliable guide of truth, since it subtracts a great deal of credibility from both Eastern and Western patrimonies, and rather lends more favor to the Protestant paradigms through which to interpret the historical data, including the Holy Scriptures. The Protestant need not worry whether councils, bishops, popes, or even the *consensus patrum* are shot through with errors and theological mistakes. His paradigm not only accepts this possibility but even expects it considering the frailty of human nature. For the Protestant, therefore, the chaotic course of Church history only makes perfect sense rather than serving as a cause for worry.

However, the Protestant burden of having to use his own resources to reconstruct the Christian faith from such chaos proves to be a more difficult weight to carry than the Catholic who has to discriminate the Petrine ideology as the method chosen by God. With no principled way to objectively standardize the apostolic data through visible organs of authority, the process quickly devolves into an endless competition between factions. St. John H. Newman was way ahead of his time when he made the following statement illustrating the basic point being stressed:

---

Unity Octave, 1949).

[24] Of course, there is always the Orthodox rebuttal that the Petrine configuration, if it consists in the sort of primacy of universal jurisdiction and infallible teaching authority, can lead to the quick demise of the whole Church if the papal head seeks to authoritatively bind all the members of Christ's body to a soul-injuring heresy. This is one of the reasons why Catholic theology teaches that such a possibility actually doesn't exist since God protects his Church by protecting the successor of St. Peter from binding the Church to theological errors. If this divine protection were untrue, then the whole idea of the papacy is incredible. The position I take in this book is that the papacy, as a doctrine, has merits to be true just based on the historical investigation provided.

> For myself, I would simply confess that *no doctrine of the Church can be rigorously proved by historical evidence*:[25] but at the same time that no doctrine can be simply disproved by it. Historical evidence reaches a certain way, more or less, *towards a proof of the Catholic doctrines*; often nearly the whole way; sometimes it goes only as far as to point in their direction; sometimes there is only an absence of evidence for a conclusion contrary to them; nay, sometimes there is an apparent leaning of the evidence to a contrary conclusion, which has to be explained; in all cases there is a margin left for the exercise of faith in the word of the Church.[26]

If one were to test Catholicism by a grueling and fiery standard of 100 percent conformity with history, then there is no question that one would behold a house of cards falling in slow motion. I think the same pertains to Orthodoxy, no less. Is history then a broken compass, as we might fear? Yes and no. If you wield the compass as if no other helps are needed, then its north is just as good as its south. That is, if you enter the historical documents expecting every instance to be an exclusive demonstration of Catholic or Orthodox truth, you will be quickly disappointed. On the other hand, if we understand that Christ promised an indefectible Church that would retain its visible unity, then there should be *sufficient* testimony to that Church in both *a priori* intelligibility and concrete historical evidence.

As of right now, I cannot find a better way, a method better attested to by history than the papacy as defined by the Catholic Church, which can maintain Christianity as *one thing* standing on two legs from the day of Pentecost to the final return of Christ. But, as St. John H. Newman

---

[25] Cardinal Henry E. Manning was famous for saying the "appeal to antiquity is both a treason and a heresy" (*The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost: Or Reason and Revelation* [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865], 226). Of course, to prevent misunderstanding, what Manning meant in the context is that if someone were to be presented with the divine voice of the true Church and then attempt to lodge an appeal to antiquity as if antiquity would possibly contradict the authority of the true Church, this is an implicit rejection of the authority of the Church. Manning was not obliterating all historical research in total but was suggesting that Catholics can't appeal to antiquity over the Church because the Church determines antiquity. If someone were not a committed Catholic, this perspective may appear as if it begs the question, and that would be correct if the Church were not trusted as the regency of Christ's authority that she claims to be.

[26] John H. Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, vol. II (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 312.

makes clear, the pure and raw historical data does not rigorously prove it. Nevertheless, the breadth of acceptance and the preponderance of evidence for the papacy throughout history serves as a strong indicator to its authenticity. Even so, the student of history is going to have to take a step into what seems like utter darkness in order to take hold of the word of the Church in faith since not everything can be verified by the raw available historical evidence.

St. John H. Newman was very much interested in history, but he realized that it was not as perfect a light to determine the precise content of divine Revelation as the visible apostolic Church that Christ appointed, and to which he gave his promise to divinely assist throughout all time until he comes again. If one were to work merely in the dim light of the raw history, it might be practically impossible to arrive at one model for what the Church of today should believe or teach, and even then, deciding between the alternatives can take the research of many lifetimes of many geniuses before reaching a confident conclusion. Even then, it will only be, at best, a probability. Both the Catholic and the Orthodox will have to qualify what it is in the vast pool of documentary evidence of history, which has inconsistencies and contrary claims and lessons, that serves to reflect the veracity of either Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the point I am driving at here is that the historical evidence of the papacy, riddled with difficulties and some seemingly unanswerable dilemmas, exceeds the amount of supporting evidence that is available to sufficiently strengthen the Orthodox opposition to it.

Of course, there will ever be, from a natural standpoint, the question of what does Catholicism offer in answer to the supposition that the pope and the papacy itself were to become so much an enemy of Christ that the whole Petrine architecture serves to destroy rather than support the Christian Church? This is, after all, the very contention of the Orthodox objector. Admittedly, the Catholic ideal is that such worries should not be necessary since the pope must be preserved from misleading the flock of Christ. But then returns the question of Honorius and Vigilius, perhaps among others. And, admittedly, the historical survey provided on what the Church can do in the case of a heretical pope, for example, can be less than fully satisfying. There is no clear mechanism with which the Church has, even up to this moment, on how to process the deposition of a pope on account of heresy.

The history seems to testify to the possibility, but the rationale has not always been clear and crisp. As surveyed in the book, the antique dictum *Prima Sedes a nemine iudicatur* (the First See is judged by no

one) was upheld by the Roman church since at least the tail end of the fifth century, but there are also signs of an awareness, as was seen in Pope Hadrian II and Pope Innocent III, that if the occupant of the First See were to deviate from the faith, this would be an exception to the rule. Unfortunately, by what means this is coherent with *Pastor Aeternus* has yet to be provided by the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

For the Orthodox, it is a valid question to pose whether there is even a point that a Catholic could identify that could serve to be the test criterion for when the Catholic Church could, hypothetically, become destroyed. With all the promises attached to the papal office, one would expect God's providence to only allow wonderful fruit and blissful support coming from the Apostolic See of Rome. Not trial, error, tyranny, and harm against the Christian faith. However, one can suppose, just as St. Cyprian understood, that Christ built the visible episcopate on the office of St. Peter, such that the whole Church rests upon the episcopal office for its unifying source, but said office can nevertheless be, under certain limited circumstances, a great harm to souls in many ways. So also, the papal office has the potential to be free to exhibit some level of human evil. Nevertheless, even if a precise point of criterion cannot be found, certainly the full use of that office,[27] a bold pronouncement

[27] As Fr. John Meyendorff argued in *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 353, one can say that this distinction between the full use of the papal office versus lesser acts of that office, such that the former alone are protected from error and the latter are not, is anachronistic since the distinction is not ancient but post reflective. A certain distinction, however, can be seen even so far back as the Apostles. Certainly, St. Peter had the capacity to err when he tried to deny that the Lord should face his self-proclaimed destiny of crucifixion and death (see Matt 16:22–23) or when he caused scandal in Antioch (see Gal 2), for which St. Paul withstood him face-to-face. And yet, all Christians believe that St. Peter was capable, in other circumstances, to be protected from error (see First and Second Epistles of Peter). When St. Peter departed from his public witness to Christ, Christ prayed for him that, after he was converted, he would strengthen the brethren. Obviously, when he was lapsed, that was antithetical to infallibility, and yet he infallibly strengthened the Church on the day of Pentecost when he preached the glory of Christ raised from the dead. Even Eastern Orthodox theologians recognize that while the bishops of the Church are not always infallible in the administration and teaching of their particular dioceses, they can speak infallibly and supremely authoritatively when in a lawfully convened ecumenical council (see Stylianos Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology*, trans. Philip Kariatlis (Sydney: St. Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2008). This kind of event took place seven times throughout the first millennium for the Orthodox. So it is unquestionable that there is a valid distinction between fallible and infallible modes of teaching. The question is whether there can be gauged criteria and *a priori* conditions for which to guarantee infallible teaching. The reasoning for the papal office is that Christ empowered St. Peter to use the keys, and the power of binding and loosing, as a way to support the universal Church, and thus it is an authoritative mode of communication.

from the very keys of Christ's kingdom, for the official administration of heresy and schism would be a clear sign that its mission had failed.

Bishop Vincent Gasser, the author of the famous *relatio* presented during the Council of Vatican I in 1870, admits to this clear test: "But if the Pontiff should ever fall into an error of faith, the Church would dissolve, deprived of her bond of unity. . . . If this Roman See could fall and be no longer the See of Truth, but of error and pestilence, then the Catholic Church herself would not have the bond of a society and would be schismatic and scattered—which is in fact impossible."[28] Roman Catholics insist that this dreadful phenomenon, by reason of a divine promise from the Lord, has never happened nor *ever could happen.* With such a clear test of verity and falsity, the Orthodox and the Catholic can critically examine the aforesaid evidence and come to their own conclusion based on where the weight shifts on the balance.

When and where the pope's ministry reaches the universal Church in such a way as to bind, so as to define the very criterion of membership or exclusion from Christian society, then and there he must not be able to teach error since that would effectively bind the Christian world to a heretical teaching and would destroy the Church. Therefore, in order to prevent that, this *ex cathedra* form of teaching must not and, according to Catholic doctrine, cannot be erroneous. So while the distinction between fallible teaching and infallible *ex cathedra* teaching isn't explicitly articulated in the first millennium, its concept is presupposed. Aside from that, if we exclude altogether the Catholic Church and its teaching on the papacy, what alternatives do the Orthodox have to show itself capable of being in continuity with the Petrine architecture so divinely instituted for the purpose of authority and unity, as spelled out by patristic antiquity? By denying the papacy, the Orthodox have put in place their own system that requires late development, namely, the guidance of pan-Orthodox synods. Surely, not even to this day is there a developed theory that all Orthodox agree on as to the binding exercise of the Church's magisterium, if such a magisterium is even held to exist.

[28] Bishop Vincent Ferrer Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility,* trans. Rev. James T. O'Connor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 24.

# Appendix: Donation of Constantine and Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals

Critics of the Catholicism have often brought up the forged documents of the eighth and ninth centuries to try to disprove the authenticity of the papacy. The attempt is to show that the papacy as an acclaimed divinely instituted organ of the Church did not actually even exist until these centuries, which explains why less than honest men had to forge spurious documents purporting the papacy as a reality. If the papacy actually existed, such forgeries would be unnecessary.[1] Why create a narrative through forged content if that content is already well accepted in the society and consciousness of the Church?

As much as the inference drawn is undeniably reasonable, it will not stand up to the facts of history. Once the historical evidence is examined, this argument against the papacy is shown to be pure mythology, rather than any exercise of reliable historiography. The two references that will be examined here are the *Donation of Constantine* and the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals*. The principal questions to be drawn are: (1) whether these writings claim on behalf of papal power that which already existed in authentic writings and were already accepted by the Church; and (2) whether the forged writings introduced new powers to the pope which were hitherto unknown before? This is actually just one question asked in two significantly different ways.

The Donation of Constantine is a certain bestowal of imperial sovereignty to Pope St. Sylvester I and "temporal dominion over the city of Rome and much of Italy."[2] Among other grants, Constantine gave full imperial recognition of Rome's primacy over all the churches and patriarchates, including the See of Constantinople. It based this recognition on the fact that the bishop of Rome is the successor of St. Peter, the

[1] Edward Denny, *Papalism: A Treatise on the Claims of the Papacy as Set Forth in the Encyclical Satis Cognitum* (London: Rivingtons, 1912), 110–11.

[2] J. Michael Miller, C.S.B, *The Shepherd and the Rock: Origins, Development, and Mission of the Papacy* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1995), 96.

"vicar of the Son of God."[3] Moreover, until it was shown as a "forgery in the fifteenth century, clerics, theologians, and princes, even those who contested the rights of the papacy, accepted this document as authentic."[4] The Donation is even found in Byzantine Canonical Collections. Being accepted by many Greeks at the beginning of the second millennium, "they claimed for the Byzantine clergy also the privileges and prerogatives granted to the pope and the Roman ecclesiastics."[5] It was recognized as authentic by the twelfth century Greek canonist Theodore Balsamon, who used the argument that since the prerogatives of Elder Rome transferred to New Rome, the church of Constantinople was now the beneficiary of the papal powers given by Emperor Constantine.[6] Balsmon also records how Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople, cited the Donation as referring to the prerogatives once held by Rome but now held by New Rome.[7] Andronicus Kamateros (1110–1180), one of the court officials to the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, recognized the primacy of Elder Rome based on his acceptance of the Donation of Constantine.[8] Barlaam of Calabria (1290–1348), whose anti-papal treatises were used by Nilus Cabasilas, accepted the primacy of Rome as described in the Donation, though he distinguished that from the divinely founded primacy from Christ in St. Peter claimed by the popes of Rome.[9]

The Donation, albeit abbreviated, is found in the *Syntagma alphabeticum* of the fourteenth century Greek canonist Matthew Blasteres.[10] Later in the fourteenth century, abbreviated versions of the Donation are found

---

[3] Full text at "Medieval Sourcebook: The Donation of Constantine (c. 750–800)," *Fordham University*, last updated Nov. 23, 1996, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/donatconst.asp.

[4] Miller, *The Shepherd and the Rock*, 96.

[5] Kirsch, s.v. "Donation of Constantine," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), *New Advent*, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05118a.htm.

[6] See "Theodore Balsamon: The Orthodox Church in the Twelfth-Century Constantinople," in *Church Law and Church Order in Rome and Byzantium: A Comparative Study*, by Clarence Gallagher (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[7] Dimiter Angelov, "The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium," in *Church and Society in Late Byzantium*, ed. D. Angelov (Kalamazoo, 2009), 95; Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West: The Church, AD 681–1071* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 308–09.

[8] A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 275.

[9] Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 310–11.

[10] Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium*, 1204–1330 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 375.

in the Greek jurist Constantine Harmenopoulos's *Hexabiblos*.[11] Regarding the Donation, Harvard Professor of Byzantine History, Dimiter Angelov, states that in the post-1204 era of Byzantine history, the Greek Church "nearly universally accepted its genuineness and legal validity."[12] Of course, none of this was held in the East to support the Roman papacy but rather the transference of papal authority to Constantinople in light of Constantine's establishment of the empire's capital in Byzantium. What this shows, at least, is that the sort of papal primacy that the Donation claims Constantine is giving to Pope St. Sylvester and his successors can be interpreted in a way that comports with the patriarch dignity of the patriarch of Constantinople. Therefore, the Donation can't be used as strict material to prove what would have been conceived as illegitimate papal powers by the Roman bishop. Just as modern Orthodox reinterpret the recognition of Petrine primacy in the Fathers in a way that comports with Eastern ecclesiology, so were the Byzantines doing this with the Donation.

The first bishop of Rome to refer to the Donation as an appeal to his supremacy was Leo IX in 1054 whereas scholars agree that its origins are in the eighth century.[13] That means for approximately three hundred years, the popes were not known to have appealed to it as a base for their authority as St. Peter's successor. Meanwhile, during this time, as the commentary of this book shows, the basic substance of the papacy was being claimed by pope's several centuries before the Donation of Constantine entered into the usage of the papal chancery. It should also be borne in mind that, rather than being contested, the Donation of Constantine, as well as other forgeries, received "rapid acceptance" by the Church at large, which shows, says Fr. Andrew Louth, "how closely they reflected the realities of the exercise of papal power" during that time.[14]

And so, given how this Donation from Constantine to St. Sylvester and his successors was "widely if incorrectly accepted as genuine by western Christendom,"[15] given how Byzantine ears didn't find anything explicitly heretical in it (in fact, they used it against Roman claims),[16] given how it was almost universally regarded as authentic until the fifteenth century,

[11] Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium*, 376.

[12] Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium*, 377.

[13] William Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), 294.

[14] Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 169.

[15] Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, *The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 93.

[16] Besides, the *Code of Justinian* itself spoke of the primacy of Elder Rome over the whole

and given how it doesn't add a crumb to the clarity of the papal claims already being made from *authentic writings* which precede the Donation (approx. eight hundred) by centuries, it seems clear that the pope's mistaken usages of the Donation, which don't even begin until the eleventh century, cannot pose a significant challenge to the commentary given in this book on the papacy in the Church Fathers that spans the time period of the apostolic era to the end of the first millennium. Indeed, greater and more significant papal claims are made in far earlier writings, the authenticity of which no scholar disputes.

Now, the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals require a bit more unpacking. This body of texts, emerging around 850,[17] was occasioned during the Carolingian Reform by various disputes within the Frankish West among secular rulers, bishops, and metropolitan jurisdictions. They consist of a number of papal decretals, letters, and other documents, some of which were authentic but many of which were simply forgeries whose origin is not certain. The true author, whose identity is assumed to be Isidore Mercator,[18] sought to use the name Isidore probably to integrate the fame of the bishop and canonist, St. Isidore of Seville, as well as Marius Mercator. Being originated in the Frankish West, these decretals were specifically related to issues external to Rome, but they ended up bringing Rome into the mix through an appeal to the superiority of papal authority over those local structures which threatened the rights of bishops. The late Church history lecturer, Rev. Dr. G. S. M. Walker, succinctly summarizes the context: "The immediate purpose of these forgeries was to strengthen the local bishops against their metropolitans by exalting the comparatively distant papacy, and at the same time to protect Church property from the greed of lay impropriators."[19]

Thus, the aim was not, in the first instance, to expand papal authority but rather to use the already preexisting and presupposed papal authority to aid in the strengthening of local bishops over and against secular interference in ecclesiastical affairs, as well as metropolitical supremacy. Rather than creating afresh an innovative office of universal jurisdiction

universal Church in similar language as the Donation of Constantine. The Byzantines would not have had too much of an issue with the language, even *prima facie*.

[17] Trevor Jalland, *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 377.

[18] Isidore Mercator is a joining of the names of St. Isidore of Seville and Marius Mercator; see Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. Robert T. Handy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 212.

[19] G. S. M. Walker, *The Growing Storm: Sketches of Church History from A.D. 600 to A.D. 1350* (London: The Paternoster Press, 1961), 55.

in Rome, the decretals, says Fr. Klaus Schatz, "made use of the acknowledged authority of Rome in order to break the much closer and more dangerous authority of the metropolitans," which shows "the degree to which the position of Rome was *already acknowledged* as a matter of course: For even, or especially, in a forged document one appeals to notions of law that already seem at least plausible in order to support one's own doubtful claims."[20]

While the universal jurisdiction of the pope was generally acknowledged, there were ecclesiastical figures outside of Rome who thought to come up with specific laws that would be "sanctioned" by the authority of the pope. Often enough, the false decretals are thought to be a point where the papacy was being invented. But Fr. John Chapman rightly responds to this: "If it had not already been firmly established that a papal decretal was an absolute law for the Church, what would have been the use of forging any at all?"[21] Imagine a teenager who wants to excuse himself from days in school, and so he forges a letter from his parents and his family care doctor. The whole point of making such a document is because both the parents and the doctor stand as having the authority to support that excuse.

One of the most influential critics of the First Vatican Council was a German scholar named Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890), who was famously excommunicated for publicly protesting the council. He wrote a book entitled *The Pope and the Council* (originally under the name Janus), and one of his principal arguments against the papacy was that the apostolic and traditional ecclesiology of the Church was altered in large part because of the renovations introduced by the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. To his credit, Döllinger recognized the truth that the original intention of these decretals was not to modify or expand papal authority. He admits as much in the following: "It is true that the immediate object of the compiler of this forgery was only to protect bishops against their metropolitans and other authorities, so as to secure absolute impunity, and to the exclusion of all influence of the secular power."[22] However, he then adds:

---

[20] Fr. Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 70.

[21] John Chapman, *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905), 96.

[22] Janus, *The Pope and the Council*, third edition (London: Rivingtons, 1870), 95.

> But this end was to be gained through such an immense extension of Papal power, that, as his principles gradually penetrated the Church, and were followed out into their consequences, she necessarily assumed the form of an absolute monarchy subjected to the arbitrary power of a single individual, and the foundation of the edifice of Papal infallibility was already laid—first, by the principle that the decree of *every Council require Papal confirmation*; secondly, by the assertion that the *fullness of power*, even in matters of faith, *resides in the Pope alone*, who is bishop of the universal Church, while the *other bishops are his servants*.[23]

There are three basic renovations that Döllinger purports to have been added to the Church's constitution in Pseudo-Isidore: (1) All synods required the authority of the Apostolic See for them to be finalized, (2) the bishop of Rome has the "fullness of power" to govern the Church, and (3) bishops have a portion of the responsibility of Church government whereas the pope's jurisdiction is over the whole universal Church. Here, I am following the summation by late Rev. Joseph Hergenröther (1824–1890),[24] who sufficiently refuted Döllinger's book as well as his take on the decretals and their import.

In response to (1), we can show that this principle predates 850, the time of Pseudo-Isidore's creation, by several centuries. In the commentary of the book, it was shown how the Greek historians in Constantinople, Socrates and Sozomen, both writing in the mid-fifth century, made it clear that synods that did not have the approval of the bishop of Rome were null and void. At the opening of the Council of Chalcedon, the papal legate had announced that Dioscorus was to be judged for he had the audacity to hold a council without the authority of the bishop of Rome (i.e., Ephesus II, 449). St. Gregory the Great, I recorded, spoke of his predecessor's annulling the decrees of a synod held in Constantinople in the late sixth century because the patriarch called himself the "Ecumenical Bishop." Pope St. Leo the Great argued against the authoritative standing of the third canon of Constantinople (381) on the basis that it had not been reviewed by the Apostolic See. Thus, whatever forgeries were produced by Pseudo-Isidore, they was not

[23] Janus, *The Pope and the Council*, 95–96 (emphasis added).

[24] Joseph Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus: An Historico-Theological Criticism of the Work, Entitled "The Pope and the Council," by Janus*, trans. J. B. Robertson, Esq. (London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1870), 159.

to create a foundation for papal authority but simply for the purpose of adding more historical basis in his own creative way in order to impact the Frankish realm with their preponderance. The bishops of Rome had been both claiming this authority and exercising it, completely without the aid of Pseudo-Isidore.

For (2), it had been well claimed by Pope St. Leo that Christ had bestowed upon St. Peter a unique and special partnership in the power of the keys, such that whoever Christ governs, St. Peter governs also through Christ. That is tantamount to a claim to St. Peter's successor possessing "*full power*" over the universal Church. The high claims of papal authority by Pope St. Nicholas I, which said he had the power to loosen what any other cleric or council has bound, was explicitly stated by Pope St. Gelasius nearly four hundred years prior to the creation of Pseudo-Isidore, and St. Gelasius was simply handing on what he understood was apostolic, traditional, and canonical. Certainly, the same line of thought is found in St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Theodore the Studite, as well as the Byzantine toleration of the letters of Pope Hadrian I to Empress Irene and Emperor Constantine VI, as well as Pope John VIII's letters to the emperor and the Council of Constantinople 879–880. These are all authentic writings.

As for the infallibility of the papal office, the Formula of Hormisdas (519) and the dogmatic letter of Pope St. Agatho to the Sixth Ecumenical Council, both largely accepted by the Greek episcopate, are clear claims to papal infallibility and occurred centuries before Pseudo-Isidore authored his forgeries.

In response to (3), Hergenröther shows that Döllinger misrepresented Pseudo-Isidore who, in other places, based the "Episcopal power immediately from Christ and His apostles."[25] Ultimately, Hergenröther is compelled by the evidence to conclude the following:

> The propositions—that without the previous knowledge of the See of Rome, no national synod was to be held; that every accused bishop had the right to appeal to the Pope, especially from suspected and hostile judges; that the *causae majors* belonged to the jurisdiction of the Roman See—these propositions are all more ancient than pseudo-Isidore; and Pope Nicholas had no need of him.[26]

[25] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 161.

[26] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 164.

It is significant that Hergenröther brings up Pope St. Nicholas since, as is accepted by modern scholarship, Pseudo-Isidore compiled his forged tripartite body of literature in the mid-ninth century, and if they were offering a whole new renovation of papal expansionism, it would be Pope St. Nicholas I who would have seized the opportunity to make use of them to justify his position in authority over all the churches. In fact, the strongest critics against the papacy have attempted to argue that Pope St. Nicholas, realizing that he otherwise lacked the capacity to exercise universal jurisdiction, took the opportunity afforded by these false decretals, at some point coming to his knowledge, in order to bring papal power to a brand new conception hitherto neither known nor active.

However, according to renowned medieval historian Horst Fuhrmann (1926–2011), "the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals had been known to Pope Nicholas I, but his conduct had *not been influenced by the forgery*. Pope Nicholas showed 'great reserve vis-à-vis this new and unknown element.'"[27] Rather than finding the basis for his understanding of papal jurisdiction over the universal Church, he "did not need to resort to the forgeries, but it was precisely due to their congruence with his concepts that the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals entered Rome not as a stranger but as a confirmation of many of the papacy's own convictions."[28] Henry Chadwick, likewise, comments on St. Nicholas's greater reliance on traditional beliefs:

> Yet it would be hard to assert that the Decretals implanted in Nicholas grander notions of his authority than he *already possessed*, mainly by inheritance from his predecessors since the time of Leo I and especially Gelasius I and the popes of the age of the Acacian Schism (484–518). . . . To be out of communion with the see of Rome was to be outside the ark of salvation, and as universal bishop he had to give account for all believers at the Last Judgment. He had inherited the power to bind and loose entrusted by Christ to St Peter, and therefore determined both doctrine and discipline, being

[27] Horst Fuhrmann, "The Pseudo-Isidorian Forgeries," in *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages*, by Detlev Jasper and Horst Fuhrmann (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 186.

[28] Fuhrmann, "The Pseudo-Isidorian Forgeries," in in *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages*, by Jasper and Fuhrmann, 192. Jalland, too, reports that even the scholarship in his own day had abandoned the claim that Pope St. Nicholas sought to create papal claims via Pseudo-Isidore, and agrees that St. Nicholas's claims were homegrown according to Roman's own authentic tradition (see *The Church and Papacy*, 378 and 384).

> entirely within his rights in deposing disobedient bishops. With the authority of a "superinspector" he had power to inquire into every church, and could take initiatives in regulating whatever might be amiss.[29]

One particular dispute worth mentioning is a situation under a renowned Canon Hincmar, archbishop of Reims (845–882), where he deposed one of his bishops, Rothad of Soissons. Rothad appealed his case to Rome, and instead of having the case returned to the regional court, the pope had Rothad travel to Rome where his deposition was overturned.[30] It is reported that Rothad brought with him to Rome at least portions of Pseudo-Isidore in order to bolster the pope's sense that he could overturn his deposition.[31] While it is true that the pope included references to Pseudo-Isidore in his letter to the West that justified his restoring Rothad, he also included references to Pope St. Leo's letters, the Council of Sardica (343), and Pope St. Innocent I, all of which come centuries before Pseudo-Isidore.[32] This shows, as Ullmann observed, that the false decretals for Pope St. Nicholas function as "little more than a useful and handy reference work which made time-consuming search for earlier papal manifestations superfluous."[33]

Hincmar wrote a letter to the pope with the following: "I know that we as bishops are subject to the pope of Rome. . . . If it shall be your pleasure to restore Rothad, I will submit quietly to your will."[34] Interestingly enough, a situation very similar to this occurred four hundred years earlier between Pope St. Leo I and St. Hilary of Arles. As metropolitan in Arles, St. Hilary had deposed a certain Celidonius, bishop of Besancon. Celidonius went straight to Rome where Pope St. Leo overturned his

---

[29] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 100–101.

[30] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 351; Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 70. For more info, see Eugen Ewig, "The Papacy and the West from 840–875," in *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History*, trans. Anselm Biggs, eds. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 141–50.

[31] Ewig, "The Papacy and the West from 840–875,"in *Handbook of Church History*, eds. Jedin and Dolan, 141–50.

[32] Paolo Bottalla, S.J., *Pope and Schism: Strictures on Mr. Ffoulkes' Letter to Archbishop Manning* (London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1869), 18n5.

[33] Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1955), 191.

[34] Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 351, citation from *Carolingian portraits: A study in the Ninth Century*, by Eleanor Shipley Duckett (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 235; Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 93.

deposition. "Such a course went far beyond any action which could be based on the Sardican canons."[35] St. Hilary had trouble with this decision on the part of the pope and caused somewhat of a resistance to the judgment of Rome. Ultimately, Pope St. Leo took authoritative action and began to penalize him by stripping away certain privileges he had while metropolitan. Interestingly enough, in one letter of St. Leo, he makes it seem like appeals similar to Celidonius were quite frequent: "And so we would have you recollect, brethren, as we do, that the Apostolic See, such is the reverence in which it is held, has times out of number been referred to and consulted by the priests of your province as well as others, and in the various matters of appeal, as the old usage demanded, it has reversed or confirmed decisions."[36]

In order to ensure the religious and apostolic authority of St. Leo would hold sway over the Western Churches of Gaul and everywhere else, Emperor Valentinian III was sought to publish an edict on the binding nature of papal judgments. "There can be no question," writes Denny, "that the Edict was of great assistance to the Bishops of Rome in their efforts to bring the Metropolitans and Bishops of the various Provinces in the West into subjection to their authority."[37] Denny goes on to describe the nature of papal authority as described in the edict as conferring "on the Roman bishops a jurisdiction practically imperial in extent and power," that of an "autocratic authority," and an absolute sovereign over his subjects.[38] That edict states the following concerning St. Leo's sentence against St. Hilary:

> This same sentence would have been valid through the Gauls, without imperial sanction; for what is not allowed in the Church to the authority of so great a pontiff? . . . [B]y this perpetual edict . . . it shall not be lawful for the bishops of Gaul or of the other provinces, contrary to ancient custom, to do aught without the authority of the venerable Pope of the Eternal City; and whatever the authority of the

[35] Denny, *Papalism*, 104.

[36] Leo, Letter 10, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), rev. and ed. for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604010.htm.

[37] Denny, *Papalism*, 105.

[38] Denny, *Papalism*, 103.

> Apostolic See has enacted, or may hereafter enact, shall be the law for all.[39]

Such an edict nearly renders the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals "superfluous,"[40] if only it had become a universal law in the West for all time. In any case, that such a view of the Apostolic See could be held by St. Leo the Great and that such an edict could be passed by the Western emperor shows that Pseudo-Isidore was not the originating point for Rome as holding supreme jurisdiction over the Church, not least in the West.

Or how about St. Isidore of Seville (560–636), who is equally venerated by both Catholics and Orthodox? After all, Pseudo-Isidore, claiming to be Isidore Mercator, was most likely using St. Isidore's name as a pseudonym. According to Jaroslav Pelikan, St. Isidore strangely held that the bishop of Rome, "as supreme pontiff, was 'the chief of priest . . . the highest priest;' *it was he who appointed all other priests in the church and who had all ecclesiastical offices at his disposal.*"[41] It is unclear what that means, but it surely does not describe a mere patriarch of the West!

With all this testimony of the authoritative primacy of Rome stretching back centuries before Pseudo-Isidore, it is very unlikely that the false decretals were introducing any new core doctrine hitherto unknown in the ninth century. But why, then, create forgeries? The late German historian Eugen Ewig (1913–2006) summarized this as well as it can be:

> The effects of the False Capitularies and False Decretals were limited in the ninth century. The forgeries provided Nicholas I with important tools but they did not give his pontificate its special character. It has been rightly stressed that the forgeries, far from establishing papal power, *presupposed it.* But they did give to Rome's authority a juridical form and in the eleventh century they became an essential

[39] *Valentinian III on the Roman Primacy and on Hilary of Arles*, 445, from "Constitutio Valentinian III," in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337–461*, by W. H. C. Frend and J. Stevenson, new edition (London: SPCK, 1989), 303–04.

[40] Hergenröther, *Anti-Janus*, 138. Döllinger admits that this edict changed the whole constitution of the conciliar Church; see Janus, *The Pope and the Council*, 83.

[41] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 48.

> instrument in the papal government of the Church, a basis of the Roman primacy of jurisdiction.[42]

Many theologians and clerics assumed the legitimacy of Pseudo-Isidore since the claims in them were so close to what was already acknowledged that it could almost be camouflage with authentic claims to papal authority. One figure who has the status of being a pre-schism saint, whose feast is November 13, is St. Abbo of Fleury (945–1004). This was a well-educated man who was known to have cited from Pseudo-Gregory IV, which was a forged document claiming to be a writing from St. Gregory the Great.[43] About the status of the Roman church, he wrote the following in a letter to a certain Abbot named Leo:

> The authority of the Roman and apostolic see shines over the universal church of the whole world with the favour of Christ our Lord. And no wonder, when the pontiffs of the same see are seen to *fill the place of St. Peter*, who is the prince of the whole Church.[44]

And:

> The Roman Church by its excellence has this privilege above all churches that, as the key-bearer of the kingdom of heaven, obtained the chief place among the apostles (*principatum apostolici culminis*), so the Roman Church gives authority to all its members throughout the four corners of the globe. *Hence, what else does he do who opposes the Roman Church but withdraw himself from its society and take his stand with the enemies of Christ?*[45]

These words are remarkable since they echo the very same claims made by the popes going back to St. Stephen (third century), and yet he

[42] Eugen Ewig, "Reform, Theology, and Education under the Later Carolingians," in *Handbook of Church History*, eds. Jedin and Dolan, 169.

[43] Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement* (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 1987), 129.

[44] Abbo, *Collectio Canonum*, Epistle 5, in *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, by Mostert, 128.

[45] Abbo, *Collectio Canonum*, Epistle 5, in *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 4, trans. Horace K. Mann and Johannes Hollensteiner (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1910), 393n2.

is also one who trusted in the corpus found in Pseudo-Isidore (which had a mixture of authentic and forged writings). This is evidence that the forgeries were not providing a substantially new concept hitherto unknown. The evidence simply does not support that. Add to this that St. Abbo is a saint of Christ's Church before the Latin and Byzantine schism and is venerable by the Eastern Orthodox.

Therefore, seeing as how the core substance of the papal claims found in the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals are found in authentic writings up to four centuries prior to their creation in the ninth century, given how believable it was to convince the masses that the Decretals were genuine, given that they were created in Western Frankia rather than Rome, given how, aside from a few exceptions, "no one raised his voice against the forgeries till the fifteenth century,"[46] and given the fact that popes don't begin to use them in order to justify papal authority until the ninth century (and even then only slightly), *the false decretal's objection to the papacy is almost altogether negligible.* As Ewig states, Pseudo-Isidore probably understood that everyone accepted the core idea of the papal primacy of jurisdiction, but thought a certified and official form of how that jurisdiction played out was tailored to the needs as they were felt in the ninth century Frankish Church under the Carolingian Reform. That is not, of course, to justify the act of forging decretals, but the existence of them does not demonstrate the kind of refutation that papal opponents intend by using them.

[46] *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, volume 9, eds. Albert Hauck et al. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1911), 347. Interestingly enough, it was Nicholas of Cusa and Juan Torquemada, both who accepted the papacy and the latter who was a foremost defender of its supremacy, who would be the ones to call the decretals into question; see *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, eds. Albert Hauck et al., 347.

# Works Cited


Adamiak, Stanislaw. *Carthage, Constantinople, and Rome: Imperial and Papal interventions in the life of the Church in Byzantine Africa 533–698*. Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016.

Adcock, F. E. *Roman Political Ideas and Practice*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972.

Agachi, Adrian. "A Critical Presentation of the Work of Theodore Abu Qurrah in Defense of Icons." *Heythrop Journal*, issue 2 (2016): 259.

Agius, Monsignor George. *Tradition and the Church*. Boston: The Stratford Company, 1928; republished by Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 2005.

Albright, W. F, and C. S. Mann, eds. and trans. *Matthew: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971.

Alexander, Paul J. *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Alfeyev, Hilarion. *Orthodox Christianity (Volume 1): The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*. Translated by Basil Bush. Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011.

_____. "Primacy in Preparation for the 2016 Great and Holy Council." *St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary*. November 8, 2019. https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/svsvoices/primacy_in_preparation_for_the_2016_great_and_holy_council.

_____. "The Current Situation Creates a Threat of Schism for Universal Orthodox." *Orthodox Christianity*. September 9, 2018. http://orthochristian.com/115613.html.

Alivisatos, Hamilcar. "Is It Possible to Convoke an Ecumenical Council?" *Diakonia* 4.1 (1969): 20.

Allen, John L., Jr. "With or Without Russia, Spokesman Says Orthodox Council is 'Binding.'" *Crux*. June 15, 2016. https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2016/06/without-russia-spokesman-says-orthodox-council-binding/.

Allen, Pauline. *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Allen, Pauline and Bronwen Neil, eds. *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Allies, Thomas W. *The Holy See and the Wandering of the Nations: From St. Leo I to St. Gregory I.* London: Burns & Oates, 1888.

———. *The See of St. Peter, The Rock of the Church, The Source of Jurisdiction, and Centre of Unity.* London: Burns & Lambert, 1850.

Ambrose of Milan. Letter 13. In *The Letters of S. Ambrose.* London: Oxford, James Parker and Co., and Rivingtons, 1881. Accessible at Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/58783/58783-h/58783-h.htm#b077b.

———. *Letters.* Vol. 26, *Fathers of the Church.* Translated by Sister Mary Melchior Beyenka, O.P. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1954.

———. *Concerning Virginity.* In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 10, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H.T.F. Duckworth. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3407.htm.

Anastasius, Sinaita. *The Life of Our Holy Father St. Maximus the Confessor.* Translated by Father Christopher Birchall. Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982.

Anastos, Milton V., Speros Vryonis, and Nicholas Goodhue. "A Survey of the Relations between the Byzantine and the Roman Churches." In *Aspects of the Mind of Byzantium: Political Theory: Theology, and Ecclesiastical Relations with the See of Rome.* London: Routledge, 2001.

Angelov, Dimiter. *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

———. "The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium." In *Church and Society in Late Byzantium,* edited by D. Angelov. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Studies, 2009.

Angold, Michael. "The Fall of Jerusalem in 1187 to Saladin and Its Impact on Byzantine Opinion." In *Byzantium and the West: Perception and Reality 11th–15th c.* Edited by N. G. Chrissis, Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Angeliki Papageorgiou. London: Routledge, 2019.

Aquinas, Thomas. "Of the Episcopal Dignity, and That Therein One Bishop Is Supreme." In *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation (with some abridgment) of the Summa Contra Gentiles of St. Thomas Aquinas.* Edited and translated by Joseph Rickaby, S.J. London: Burns & Oats, 1905.

"Archbishop of Cyprus Commemorates Head of Ukrainian Schismatics without Synodal Consent." *Orthodox Christianity*. October 24, 2020. https://orthochristian.com/134829.html.

Athanasius of Alexandria. *Apologia Contra Arianos*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2808.htm.

———. *De Sententia Dionysii*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Archibald Robertson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2810.htm.

———. *History of the Arians*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2815.htm.

Augustine of Hippo. *Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichaeus*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. Translated by Richard Stothert. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1405.htm.

———. *Answer to Petilian the Donatist*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 4, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by J. R. King, and rev. by Chester D. Hartranft. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14092.htm.

———. *City of God*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 2, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by Marcus Dods. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120116.htm.

———. Letters of St. Augustine of Hippo. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 1, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by J. G. Cunningham. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102.htm.

———. *On Baptism, against the Donatists* (Book II). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 4, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by J. R. King, and revised by Chester D. Hartranft. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14082.htm.

———. *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin* (Book II). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* first series, vol. 5, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/15062.htm.

Ayer, Joseph Cullen. *A Source Book for Ancient Church History: From the Apostolic Age to the Close of the Conciliar Period.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

Barraclough, Geoffrey. *The Medieval Papacy.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1968.

Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch. *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.* Edited by John Chryssavgis. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011.

Basil the Great. Letters. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 8, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Blomfield Jackson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202.htm.

———. *On the Holy Spirit.* Translated by Stephen Hildebrand. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011.

Batiffol, Pierre. *Catholicism and Papacy: Some Anglican and Russian Difficulties.* London: Sands & Co., 1925.

———. *Primitive Catholicism.* London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911.

Baus, Karl. *History of the Church, Vol. 1: From the Apostolic Community to Constantine.* Edited by Hubert Jedin and John Dolan. New York: Crossroad Publishers, 1986.

Baynes, Norman H. "Optatus." *Journal of Theological Studies,* vol. os-XXVI, issue 101 (October 1924): 37–44. https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/os-XXVI.101.37.

Bebis, George. "Tradition in the Orthodox Church." *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.* Accessed September 17, 2021. https://www.goarch.org/-/tradition-in-the-orthodox-church.

Beck, Hans-George. "The Greek Church in the Epoch of Iconoclasm." In *The Church in the Age of Feudalism.* Vol. 3, *Handbook of Church History.* Translated by Anselm Biggs. Edited by Hubert Jedin and John Dolan. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969.

Bede. *A History of the English Church and People.* Translation by Leo Sherley-Price. Revised by R. E. Latham. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1955.

Bellarmine, Robert. *De Controversiis: Tomus II.* Vol.1, *On the Church: On Councils, On the Church Militant, On the Marks of the Church.* Translated by Ryan Grant. Post Fall, ID: Mediatrix Press, 2017.

_____. *De Romano Pontifice on The Roman Pontiff.* Vol. 2. Translated by Ryan Grant. Post Falls, ID: Mediatrix Press, 2015.

Benedict XVI. *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times: A Conversation with Peter Seewald.* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010.

_____. General Audience. Wednesday, June 7, 2006. http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060607.html.

Benz, Ernst. *The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963.

Blowers, Paul M. *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Boniface. Epistle 15. *Ad Rufum et Alios Epis.* In *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy,* by Scott, S. Herbert. London: Sheed and Ward, 1928. Reprinted by Mysterium Co., 2015.

Booth, Phil. *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Borbrinskoy, Boris. *The Mystery of the Church: A Course in Orthodox Dogmatic Theology.* Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012.

Bottalla, Paul S.J. *Pope and Schism: Strictures on Mr. Ffoulkes' Letter to Archbishop Manner.* London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1869.

Bouteneff, Peter. *Sweeter Than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006.

Bouyer, Louis. *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit.* Translated by Charles Underhill Quinn. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982.

_____. *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism.* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017.

_____. *The Word, Church, and Sacrament: In Protestantism and Catholicism.* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004.

Braaten, Carl E. and Robert W. Jenson, eds. *Church Unity & The Papal Office.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

Bratsiotis, Panagiotis. *The Greek Orthodox Church.* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Bray, Gerald. *Creeds, Councils, and Christ.* Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984.

Brent, Allen. *Cyprian and Roman Carthage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Brezzi, Paola. *The Papacy: Its Origins and Historical Evolution.* Translated by Henry J. Yannone. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1958.

Brian-Chaninov, Nicolas. *The Russian Church.* London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1931.

Browning, Robert. *Justinian and Theodora.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.

Brubaker, L., and J. Haldon. *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Bulgarian Hierarchs. "Three hierarchs of Bulgarian Orthodox Church make statement on situation in Ukraine." *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations.* October 9, 2018. https://mospat.ru/en/2018/10/12/news165075/.

Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Orthodox Church.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988.

Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Age of Constantine the Great.* Translated by Moses Hadas. New York: Vintage Books, 1967; from original Pantheon Books, 1949.

Burn-Murdoch, H. *The Development of the Papacy.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954.

Burns, J. Patout, Jr. "The Holiness of the Church in North African Theology." In *The Hermeneutics of Tradition: Explorations and Examinations,* edited by Craig Hovey and Cyrus P. Olsen, 75–104. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.

Bury, J. B. *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire: From the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I, A.D. 802–867.* London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1912.

_____. *Cambridge Medieval History.* Vol. 4, *The Eastern Roman Empire (717–1453).* Edited by J. R. Tanner, C. W. Previtè-Orton, and Z. N. Brooke. Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1923.

Butler, Basil Christopher. *The Church and Unity: An Essay.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1979.

_____. "St. Augustine's Teaching on Schism." *Downside Review* 69 (January 1951): 137–54.

_____. *The Church and Infallibility.* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954.

_____. *The Idea of the Church.* London: Helicon Press, 1962.

Butler, Dom Cuthbert. *The Vatican Council 1869–1870: Based on Bishop Ullathorne's Letters.* Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1962.

Butler, S., N. Dahlgreen, and D. Hess, eds. *Jesus, Peter, & the Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy.* Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1996.

"Cardinal Burke: 'No, I am not saying that Pope Francis is in heresy.'" *The Catholic World Report.* December 19, 2016. https://www.catholicworldreport.com

/2016/12/19/cardinal-burke-no-i-am-not-saying-that-pope-francis-is-in-heresy/.

Carlton, Clark. *The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church*. Salisbury, MA: Regina Press, 1999.

Carmody, James M. and Thomas E. Clarke, eds. *Christ and His Mission: Christology and Soteriology*. Vol. 3, *Sources of Christian Theology*. General Editor, Paul F. Palmer, S.J. Westminster: The Newman Press, 1966.

Carroll, William. *The Building of Christendom*. Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Second edition. New York: Doubleday, 1995.

Cavarnos, Constantine. *The Question of Union: A Forthright Discussion of the Possibility of Union of the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism*. Translated by Patrick Barker. Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1992.

Cave, William. *A Dissertation Concerning the Government of the Ancient Church by Bishops, Metropolitans, and Patriarchs: More Particularly Concerning the Ancient Power and Jurisdiction of the Bishops of Rome, and the Encroachments of That upon Other Sees, Especially the See of Constantinople*. In *Primitive Christianity*. Revised by Henry Cary. London: Oxford, 1840.

Cavill, Paul, ed. *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004.

Chadwick, Henry. *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

_____. "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea." In *Henry Chadwick: Selected Writings*, edited by William G. Rusch, 63–86. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017.

_____. *The Early Church*. Revised ed. London: Penguin Books, 1993.

_____. *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great*. Oxford University Press, 2001. Revised 2004.

Chaillot, Christine. "The Ancient Oriental Churches." In *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*. Edited by Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker. New York: Oxford University, 2006.

Chapman, John. *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905.

_____. *Studies on the Early Papacy*. Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Co., 2012. Republished from New York: Benziger Brothers, 1928.

_____. *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility*. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1906.

Charanis, Peter. *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire: Religious Policy of Anastasius the Great 491–518*. 2nd ed. Thessaloniki Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1974.

Cheetham, Sir Nicholas. *A History of the Popes*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, Inc., 1982.

Chrysos, Evangelos. "New Perceptions on Imperium and Sacerdotium in the Letters of Pope Nicholas III to Emperor Michael III." In *Constantinople réelle et imaginaire autour de l'œuvre de Gilbert Dagron*. Paris: Collège de France, 2018.

———. *Η εκκλησιαστικη πολιτικη του Ιουστινιανου: κατα την εριν περι τα τρια κεφαλαια και την Ε' Οικουμενικην Συνοδον*. Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1969. English translation of title: *The Ecclesiastical Policy of Justinian in the Dispute Concerning the Three Chapters and the Fifth Ecumenical Council*.

Chrysostomos of Etna and Auxentios of Photiki. *The Roman West and the Byzantine East*. 2nd ed. Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1997.

Chryssavgis, John, ed. *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*. Vols. 1–2. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016.

Cirlot, Felix L. *Apostolic Succession: At the Bar of Modern Scholarship*. West Park, NY: Holy Cross Press, 1946.

Clark, Mary T. *Marius Victorinus: Theological Treatises on the Trinity*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1978.

Clarkson, J., John H. Edwards, William J. Kelly, and John J. Welch, eds. *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*. Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973.

Cleenewerck, Laurent. *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches*. Washington DC: Euclid University Press, 2007.

Clément, Olivier. *Conversations with Ecumenical Bartholomew I*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

———. *You are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003.

*Code of Canon Law*. Piccadilly, London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983.

Code of Justinian. *The Civil Law, Including the Twelve Tables, the Institutes of Gaius, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo*. Translated by Samuel P. Scott. Cincinnati: Central Trust, 1932. https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ1_Scott.htm#1.

Cohen, Will. "Recent Trends and Tensions." In *Primacy in the Church: The Office of Primate and the Authority of Councils*, vol. 2, edited by John Chryssavgis, 839–59. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016.

Cohen, William. "Bulgakov and von Balthasar on Vatican I." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 58:4 (2014): 401–15.

Collins, K. J. and J. Walls. *Roman but not Catholic: What Remains at Stake 500 Years after the Reformation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

Comnena, Anna. *The Alexiad*. Translated by Elizabeth A. S. Dawes. London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1928. Reprint edition. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967.

Congar, Yves. *After Nine Hundred Years: The Background of the Schism Between the Eastern and Western Churches*. Chevetogne: Fordham University Press, 1959.

———. *Diversity and Communion*. London: SCM, 1984.

———. *My Journal of the Council*. Translated from French by Mary John Ronayne and Mary Cecily Boulding. English Translation Edited by Denis Minns. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Mysterium Ecclesiae*. Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day. June 24, 1973. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19730705_mysterium-ecclesiae_en.html.

Cooper, Adam. "St. Maximus the Confessor on Priesthood, Hierarchy, and Rome." *Pro Ecclesia* 10.3 (2001): 346–67.

———. *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Costigan, Richard F. *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility: A Study in the Background of Vatican I*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005.

Coulombe, Charles A. *Vicars of Christ: A History of the Popes*. New York: Citadel Press Books, 2003.

Council of Carthage (257). On the Baptism of Heretics. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Translated by Robert Ernest Wallis. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886). Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0508.htm.

Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised

and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3811.htm.

Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900; Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3810.htm.

"Council of Jerusalem (1672)." In *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem.* Translated by J. N. W. B. Robertson. London: Thomas Baker, 1899.

"Council of Lateran (649)." In *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649.* Translated by Richard Price, with contributions by Phil Booth and Catherine Cubitt. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.

Council of Sardica (A.D. 344). In *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church: Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees.* Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, second series, vol. 14, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Henry R. Percival. Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3815.htm.

Council in Trullo (A.D. 692). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3814.htm.

Craughwell, Thomas J. *St. Peter's Bones: How the Relics of the First Pope were Lost and Found . . . and then Lost and Found Again.* New York: Image, 2013.

Crawford, Peter. *Roman Emperor Zeno: The Perils of Power Politics in Fifth-century Constantinople.* Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2019.

Cristie, Ambrose and Carol Neil, eds. *Anselm of Havelberg, Anticimenon: On the Unity of the Faith and the Controversies with the Greeks.* Translated by Ambrose Cristie, OPraem, and Carol Neel. *Premonstratensian Texts and Studies,* 1. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.

Crocker III, H. W. *Triumph: The Power and the Glory of the Catholic Church—A 2,000-Year History.* Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 2001.

Cross, Bryan. "St. Optatus on Schism and the Bishop of Rome." *Called to Communion.* June 1, 2011. https://www.calledtocommunion.com/2011/06/st-optatus-on-schism-and-the-bishop-of-rome/.

_____. "The Bishops of History and the Catholic Faith: A Reply to Brandon Addison." *Called to Communion.* June 8, 2014. https://www.calledtocommunion.com/2014/06/the-bishops-of-history-and-the-catholic-faith-a-reply-to-brandon-addison/.

Cross, F. L., ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Cubitt, Catherine. "The Lateran Council of 649 as an Ecumenical Councils." In *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*. Edited by Richard Price and Mary Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011.

Cyprian of Carthage. Epistles. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Translated by Robert Ernest Wallis. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0506.htm.

———. *On the Church: Select Letters*. Translated by Allen Brent. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006.

———. *On the Church: Select Treatises*. Translated by Allen Brent. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006.

———. *Treatises*. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Translated by Robert Ernest Wallis. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0507.htm.

Cyril of Scythopolis. *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*. Edited by John Binns. Translated by Richard Price. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991.

Daley, Brian E. "The Enigma of Meletius of Antioch." In *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.* Edited by Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

———. "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches." In *Church Unity & The Papal Office*, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen, 27–59. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

Davies, J. G. *The Early Christian Church*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967.

Davis, Leo Donald. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983.

Davis, Raymond, ed. *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*. Translated by Raymond Davis. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989.

Davis, Rupert. *Why I Am a Protestant*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017.

D'Avray, D. L. "A Letter of Innocent III and the Idea of Infallibility." *The Catholic Historical Review* 66.3 (July 1980): 417–21.

Davis, Stephen J. *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity*. New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004.

Dawson, Christopher. *The Formation of Christendom*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965. Reprinted, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2008

Deanesly, Margaret. *A History of the Medieval Church: 590–1500*. London: Methuen, 1969. Ninth edition from the original 1925 edition.

Demacopoulos, George E. "Gregory the Great and the Sixth-Century Dispute over the Ecumenical Title." *Theological Studies* 70.3 (September 2009): 600–621.

———. *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013.

Denny, Edward. *Papalism: A Treatise on the Claims of the Papacy as Set Forth in the Encyclical Satis Cognitum*. London: Rivingtons, 1912.

Denzinger, H., and K. Rahner, eds. *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*. Translated by R. J. Deferrari. St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954.

de Lérins, Vincent. *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins*. In *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lérins, John Cassian*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 11, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by C. A. Heurtley. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894.

de Sales, Francis. *The Catholic Controversy*. Charlotte: TAN books and Publishers, Inc., 1986.

Diehl, Charles. "Justinian's Government in the East." In *The Cambridge Medieval History: The Rise of the Saracens and the Foundation of the Western Empire*, vol. 2. Planned by J. B. Bury. Edited by H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney. London: Cambridge University Press, 1913.

———. *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline*. Translated by Naomi Walford. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957.

Dix, Dom Gregory. *Jurisdiction in the Early Church: Episcopal and Papal*. London: The Church Literature Association, 1975.

Döllinger, Ignaz Von. *The Pope and the Council*, third edition. London: Rivingtons, 1870.

Dragas, George D. "The Eighth Ecumenical Council: Constantinople IV (879/880) and the Condemnation of the Filioque Addition and Doctrine." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44.1–4 (1999): 357–69.

Duchesne, Louis. *Early History of the Christian Church: From Its Foundation to the End of the Fifth Century*. Vol. 2. London: John Murray, 1922.

———. *The Churches Separated from Rome*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1907.

Duckett, Eleanor Shipley. *Carolingian Portraits: A Study in the Ninth Century*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962.

Dudden, Frederick H. *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*. Vol. 2. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905.

Duffy, Eamon. *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*. Third ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Dulles, Avery. "You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy." Review of *You are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection on the Exercise of Papal Primacy*, by Olivier Clément. *Pro Ecclesia* XII.3 (Summer 2003): 345–58.

Dunn, Geoffrey D., ed. *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 2016.

———. "The Development of Rome as Metropolitan of Suburbicarian Italy: Innocent's Letter to the Bruttians." *Augustinianum* 51 (June 2011): 161–190.

Dvornik, Francis. *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*. Translated by Edwin A. Quain, S.J. New York: Fordham University Press, 1966.

———. *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs: SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970.

———. "Dr. Jalland's Book on the Papacy." *New Blackfriars* 26.299 (1945): 55–59.

———. *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, issue 9, vol 2. Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966.

———. "Emperors, Popes, and General Councils." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 6, 1951. www.jstor.org/stable/1291081.

———. "Patriarch Ignatius and Caesar Bardas." In *Photian and Byzantine Ecclesiastical Studies*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1974.

———. *The Ecumenical Councils*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961.

———. *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of Apostle Andrew*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.

———. "The Patriarch Photius: Father of Schism or Patron of Reunion." In *Photian and Byzantine Ecclesiastical Studies*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1974.

———. *The Photian Schism: History and Legend*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. *Le schisme de Photius, Histoire et Légende*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1950. In-8°, 662 pages (Unam Sanctam XIX). Translation from the French obtained through Dr. Peter Gilbert. "Grumel on Dvornik." February 2011. *De unione ecclesiarum: musings on Church and State*. https://bekkos.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/grumel-on-dvornik/?fbclid=IwAR33lH7AUzJQlC5SQjO91J2wf9u5zMYKz9UyoVmrPweyv4qlluIuA799ekk.

Edwards, Mark. "Early Ecclesiology in the West." In *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, edited by Paul Avis, 163–182. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Ecumenical Patriarchate (Constantinople). "Many Questions, Simple Answers—Ecumenical Patriarchate Press Office." *Ecumenical Patriarchate. YouTube.* June 16, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyPOpuN8ZJA.

"Ecumenical Patriarch: They Are Asking for Synod Now. They Should Have Recognized Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete and Have Come." *Orthodox Times.* March 7, 2020. https://orthodoxtimes.com/ecumenical-patriarch-they-are-asking-for-synod-now-they-should-have-recognised-pan-orthodox-council-of-crete-and-have-come.

"Ecumenical Patriarch to Patriarch of Jerusalem: Don't Persist in the Initiative of a Meeting." *Orthodox Times.* January 9, 2020. https://orthodoxtimes.com/ecumenical-patriarch-to-patriarch-of-jerusalem-dont-persist-in-the-initiative-of-a-meeting/?utm_source=web&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=09-01-20_ecumenical&fbclid=IwAR3q1KFXOMUxioUB5xaqE9HNmr1uKyD3FyKNDYnjWBGjE62QBf1of6d-Pag.

Ekonomou, Andrew J. *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007.

Empie, Paul C., T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess, eds. *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978.

Empie, Paul C. and T. Austin Murphy, eds. *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974.

Englert, Clement. *An Appreciation of Eastern Christianity.* Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1972.

Eno, Robert B. *The Rise of the Papacy.* Wilmington: Michael Glazier Inc., 1990.

_____. *Teaching Authority in the Early Church.* Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1984.

_____. "The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic." *Vigiliae Christianae* 47.2 (June 1993): 158–69.

_____. "The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology." *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 37.4 (October 1973): 668–85.

Epiphanius of Salamis. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book II and III. De Fide*, second edition. Translated by Frank Williams. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013.

Erickson, John. "Chalcedon Canon 28: Its Continuing Significance For Discussion of Primacy in the Church," St. Vladimir's Orthodoxy Theological Seminary, 8n10,

https://orthodoxsynaxis.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/erickson-chalcedon-canon-28.pdf.

_____. "Leavened and Unleavened: Some Theological Implications of the Schism of 1054." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 14 (1970): 157.

_____. "*Filioque* and the Fathers at the Council of Florence." In *The Challenge of Our Past*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991.

Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.

_____. *Church History* (Book 7). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 1, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm.

Evans, James A. *The Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Empire*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005.

Evans, Robert F. *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought*. London: SPCK, 1972.

Evers, Alexander. "East and West, Emperor and Bishop: Hormisdas and the Authority of the See of Rome." In *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: Conflict and Compromise*. Edited by Andrew Fear, José Fernández, and Mar Marcos. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

Every, George. *The Byzantine Patriarchate: 451–1204*. London: SPCK, 1947.

Fairbairn, Donald. *Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Faulkner, John A. *Cyprian: The Churchman*. Cincinnati, OH: Jennings and Graham, 1906.

Feingold, Lawrence. *Faith Comes from What is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2016.

Ferreiro, Alberto. *Epistolae Plenae: The Correspondence of the Bishops of Hispania with the Bishops of Rome*. Vol. 74, *The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World*. Boston: Brill, 2020.

Fessler, Josef. *The True and False Infallibility of the Popes: A Controversial Reply to Dr. Schulte*. Translated from the third French edition by Fr. St. John of the Oratory. New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1875.

Field, Lester L., Jr. *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century Synodal Formulae in the Codex Veronesis LX*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004.

Firmilian of Caesarea. Epistle 74. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Translated by

Robert Ernest Wallis. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050674.htm.

First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3808.htm.

First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm.

Fisher, George P. *History of Christian of Doctrine*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.

Flannery, Austin, O.P., ed. *Vatican Council II, Vol. 2: More Post Conciliar Documents*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982.

Flavian of Constantinople. Letter 26. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604026.htm.

Flick, Alexander C. *The Rise of the Medieval Church*. London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.

Florovsky, Georges. *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*. zol. 1. Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972.

_____. "Orthodox Ecumenism in the Nineteenth Century." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, vol. IV, nos. 3–4 (1956): 2–53.

Ford, Gordon B. *The Letters of St. Isidore of Seville*, second edition. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1970.

Fortescue, Adrian. *The Early Papacy: To the Synod of Chalcedon in 451*, fourth ed. Edited by Alcuin Reid. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008.

_____. *Donatism*. London: Burns & Oates, 1917.

_____. *The Eastern Orthodox Church*. 2nd ed. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1908.

_____. *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914.

_____. *The Reunion Formula of Hormisdas*. Garrison, N.Y.: National Office, Chair of Unity Apostolate, 1955.

"Four Greek Metropolitans Call on Primates to Convene Pan-Orthodox

Council about Ukraine." *Orthodox Christianity*. December 2, 2019. https://orthochristian.com/126046.html.

"Fourth Council of Constantinople: 869–870." *Papal Encyclicals Online*. https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecumo8.htm.

"Fourth Lateran Council: 1215." *Papal Encyclicals Online*. https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm.

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007.

———. *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.

Frend, W. H. C. "Christianity in the Roman Empire." In *The Christian World: A Social and Cultural History of Christianity*. Edited by Geoffrey Barraclough. London: Thames & Hudson, 1981.

———. "Eastern Attitudes to Rome during the Acacian Schism." *Studies in History*, vol. 13, *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (1976): 69–81.

———. *The Early Church*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965.

———. "The Origins of the Papacy." In *The Papacy*. Edited by Paul Johnson and Michael Walsh. London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997.

———. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

———. *The Rise of the Monophysite* Movement. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Frend, W. H. C., and J. Stevenson, eds. *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337–461*. New edition. London: SPCK, 1989.

Fulgentius. *Fulgentius: Selected Works*. Translated by Robert B. Eno, S.S. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997.

Funk, F. X. *A Manual of Church History*. Vol. 1. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., Ltd., 1910.

Gallagher, Clarence. "The Nomokanon and the False Decretals: Constantinople and Rome in the Ninth Century." In *Church Law and Church Order in Rome and Byzantium: A Comparative Study*. New York: Routledge, 2018. Kindle Version, "Conclusion," §6.

Gasser, Vincent F. *The Gift of Infallibility*. Translated by Rev. James T. O'Connor. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986.

Geanakoplos, Deno J. *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization See through Contemporary Eyes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Geffert, Bryn and Theofanis G. Stavrou. "Patriarch Photios on the Powers of the

Patriarch." In *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Gerostergios, Fr. Asterios. *Justinian The Great: The Emperor and Saint*. Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982.

Gibbon, Edward. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854.

Gibbons, James. *The Faith of our Fathers*. Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1980.

———. *The Roman Martyrology*. Translated by the Archbishop of Baltimore. Last edition according to the copy printed at Rome in 1914. Revised edition, with the Imprimatur of His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons. Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1916.

Gil, Moshe. *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*. Translated by Ethel Broido. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Giles, Edward. *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority*. London: SPCK, 1952.

Gill, Fr. Joseph. *Byzantium and the Papacy, 1198–1400*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1979.

———. *The Council of Florence*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1959.

———. "The Sincerity of Bessarion the Unionist." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 26.2 (October 1975): 377–92.

Gillet, Andrew. *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411–533*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Gore, Charles. *Roman Catholic Claims*. Waterloo Place, London: Rivingtons, 1889.

Granfield, Patrick. *The Limits of the Papacy*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987.

Greenslade, Stanley L. *Schism in the Early Church*. London: Student Christian Mission Press, Ltd., 1964.

Gregory the Great. *The Letters of Pope Gregory the Great, Books 1-4*. Translated by John R. C. Martyn. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004.

———. *Registrum Epistolarum*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by James Barmby. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3602.htm.

Gregory of Nazianzus. Fifth Theological Oration. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 7. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow. Buffalo, NY: Christian

Literature Publishing Co., 1894. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310231.htm.

Gregory of Nyssa. Funeral Oration on Meletius. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 5. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2909.htm.

Grig, L. and G. Kelly, eds. *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Grillmeier, Aloys. *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*. Translation by O. C. Dean, Jr. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Grumel, Fr. Venance. Review of Fr. Francis Dvornik's "The Photian Schism." *Revue des études byzantines*, vol. 10 (1952): 282–83.

Guarino, Thomas G. *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Guettée, Vladimir. *The Papacy: Its Historic Origin and Primitive Relations with the Eastern Churches*. New York: Carleton Publisher, 1867.

Haddad, Robert M. "The Stations of the Filioque." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 46:2 (2002): 209–68.

Haldon, J. F. *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988.

Harkianakis, Stylianos. *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology*. Translated by Philip Kariatlis. Sydney: St. Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2008.

Harnack, Adolf V. *History of Dogma*. Vol. 5. Translated from third German edition by Neil Buchanan. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1899.

Hartmann, Wilfried and Kenneth Pennington, eds. *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.

Hatlie, Peter. "The Politics of Salvation: Theodore of Stoudios on Martyrdom ('Martyrion') and Speaking out ('Parrhesid')." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996): 263–287.

Hauck, Albert, Philip Schaff, and Johann Jakob Herzog, eds. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Vol. 9. New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1911.

Hefele, Charles. *A History of the Christian Councils: From the Original Documents*.

Vol. 1, *To the Close of the Council of Nicaea A.D. 325*. Translated and edited by William R. Clark. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007. Previously published by T&T Clark, 1894.

———. *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*. Vol. 2, *A.D. 326 to A.D. 429*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896.

Herbel, Oliver. "Ratramnus of Corbie, Paulinus of Aquileia, and Aeneas of Paris as Sources for Bonaventure's 'Filioque' Arguments in the 'Sentences.'" *Franciscan Studies*, vol. 65 (2007): 87–105. www.jstor.org/stable/41975422.

Hergenröther, Joseph. *Anti-Janus: An Historico-Theological Criticism of the Work, Entitled "The Pope and the Council," by Janus*. Translated by J. B. Robertson, Esq. London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1870.

Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: A Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

———. "The Quinisext Council (692) as a Continuation of Chalcedon." *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*. Edited by Richard Price and Mary Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011.

———. *The Formation of Christendom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Hertling, Ludwig. *A History of the Catholic Church*. London: Peter Owen Limited, 1956.

———. *Communio: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1972.

Hess, Hamilton. *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Sardica*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Hilarion (Troitsky). *Christianity or the Church?* Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985.

Hilary of Poitiers. *Commentary on Matthew*. Translated by D. H. Williams. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.

———. On the Councils. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 9, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by E. W. Watson and L. Pullan. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1899. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3301.htm.

Hillgarth, J. N, ed. *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750: The Conversion of Western Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969.

Hopko, Thomas. *The Orthodox* Faith. Vol. 3, *Bible and Church History*. New York: The Department of Religious Education—The Orthodox Church in America, 1973.

Horn, Cornelia B. "The Correspondence between the Monks of Syria Secunda and

Pope Hormisdas in 517/518 A.D." *Journal of Maronite Studies* 1.4 (1997). http://www.maronite-institute.org/MARI/JMS/october97/The_Correspondence_Between.htm.

Hornung, Christian. "Siricius and the Rise of the Papacy." In *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, edited by Geoffrey D. Dunn, 57–72. London: Routledge, 2016.

Hotchkiss, V. and P. Henry, eds. *Orthodoxy and Western Culture: A Collection of Essays Honoring Jaroslav Pelikan on His Eightieth Birthday*. Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2005.

Hughes, Philip. *A History of the Church*. Vol. 2, *The Church and the World the Church Created*. Reprinted in 1935. London: Sheed and Ward, 1993.

———. *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1947.

Hussey, J. M. *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Hwang, Alexander Y. *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

Innocent III. *Between God and Man: Six Sermons on the Priestly Office*. Translated by Corinne J. Vause and Frank C. Gardiner. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004.

International Theological Commission. *Sensus Fidei*. In the Life of the Church. 2014. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

International Orthodox Theological Association. "Keynote Address by Kallistos (Timothy Ware) at IOTA 2019 Conference." *Youtube*. January 11, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WexUpqstG9Q&feature=youtu.be.

Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies* (Book III, Chapter 3). In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm.

Ishak, Shenouda M. *Christology and the Council of Chalcedon*. Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2013.

Jaki, Stanley. *Eastern Orthodoxy's Witness to Papal Primacy*. Huron, MI: Real View BooksPort, 2004.

———. *Keys of the Kingdom: A Tool's Witness to Truth*. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1986.

Jalland, Trevor. *The Church and Papacy: A Historical Study*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944.

———. *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great.* London: SPCK, 1941.

Janus. *The Pope and the Council.* 3rd ed. London: Rivingtons, 1870.

Jasper, D. and H. Fuhrmann. *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages.* Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001.

Jenkins, Philips. *The Lost History of Christianity.* New York: Harper Collins, 2008.

———. *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years.* New York: HarperOne, 2011.

Jeremias, Joachim. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.

Jerome. *Against Jovinianus.* In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 14, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3009.htm.

———. *Commentary on Galatians.* Translated by Andrew Cain. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

———. From Jerome to Augustine (A.D. 404). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 6. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102075.htm.

———. Letters. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 6. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001.htm.

———. The Dialogue Against the Luciferians. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3005.htm.

John Chrysostom. Homily 54. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* first series, vol. 10. Edited by Philip Schaff. Translated by George Prevost. Revised by M. B. Riddle. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200154.htm.

John Paul II. General Audience. Wednesday, March 24, 1993. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19930324.html.

Johnson, Paul and Michael Walsh, eds. *The Papacy*. London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997.

Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority." *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. Ravenna: October 13, 2007. http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese.html.

Josephus, Flavius. *The Wars of the Jews*. Translated by William Whiston. Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2009. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link32HCH0002.

Jugie, A. A. Martin. *Will Union Be Easy for the Orientals?* Graymoor, NY: Chair of Unity Octave, 1949.

———. *Le Schisme Byzantin*. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1941.

Jurgens, W. A. *The Faith of the Early Fathers*. Vol. 1. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970.

Kalmoukos, Theodore. "Ecumenical Patriarch Urges Patriarch of Jerusalem Not to Persist on Holding Synods." *The National Herald*. January 16, 2020. https://www.thenationalherald.com/church/arthro/ecumenical_patriarch_urges_patriarch_of_jerusalem_not_to_persist_on_holding_synaxis-21207/.

Kariatlis, Philip. *Church as Communion: The Gift and Goal of Koinonia*. Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Theology, 2011.

Kasper, Walter, ed. *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*. New York: The Newman Press, 2006.

Kaufman, Peter Iver. *Church, Book, and Bishop: Conflict and Authority in Early Latin Christianity*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

Kazhdan, Alexander. *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Vol. 3. Edited by Alexander P. Kazhdan, Alice-Mary Talbot, et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, second ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. Revised ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

———. *Golden Mouth*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.

———. *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975.

———. *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1986.

Kelly, Joseph F. *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009.

Kenrick, Francis P. *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*. Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1857.

Khomyakov, Aleksey and Ivan Kireyevsky. *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader, with Essays by Yury Samarin, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Pavel Florensky*. Edited and translated by Bors Jakim and Robert Bird. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998.

Kidd, Beresford J. *A History of the Church to A.D. 461*. Vol. II. London: Oxford University Press, 1992.

———. *The Roman Primacy: To A.D. 461*. London: The Macmillan Publishing Company, 1936.

Kinsman, Joseph F. *Salve Mater*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920.

Klauser, Theodor. *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and Some Reflections*. 2nd ed. Translated by John Halliburton. Oxford University Press, 1979.

Konstantinova, Elena. "Head of Phanar in Athos Persuades Monks to Unite with Catholics." *Union of Orthodox Journalists*. November 25, 2019. https://spzh.news/en/news/66683-glava-fanara-na-afone-ubezhdal-bratiju-v-neobkhodimosti-jedinenija-s-katolikami.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.

Küng, Hans. *Structures of the Church*. Translated by Salvator Attanasio. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964.

Ladouceur, Paul. *Modern Orthodox Theology: Behold, I Make All Things New*. London: T&T Clark, 2019.

Lambriniadis, Elpidophoros. "First Without Equals: A Response to the Text on Primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate." *Ecumencal Patriarchate*. February 12, 2014. https://www.patriarchate.org/-/primus-sine-paribus-hapantesis-eis-to-peri-proteiou-keimenon-tou-patriarcheiou-moschas-tou-sebasmiotatou-metropolitou-prouses-k-elpidophorou.

Lamoreaux, John C. "The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 25–40. www.jstor.org/stable/1291852. Accessed June 25, 2020.

_____. *Theodore Abū Qurrah*. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005.

Larchet, Jean-Claude. "The Question of the Roman Primacy in the Thought of Saint Maximus the Confessor." In *Petrine Ministry*. Edited by Cardinal Walter Kasper. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 2006.

Latourette, Kenneth S. *A History of Christianity*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1953.

Laux, Fr. John. *Church History: A Complete History of the Catholic Church to the Present Day*. Charlotte: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1989.

Leith, John H., ed. *Creeds of the Churches*. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963.

Leo the Great. Epistle XI. *Patrologiae Latina*. In Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating of the History of the Church, AD 337–461, edited by J. Stevenson. New York: The Seabury Press, 1966.

_____. Letters. In Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 12. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604.htm.

_____. Sermons of St. Leo the Great. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12. Edited Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3603.htm

L'Huillier, Peter. *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, 1996.

*Liber Pontificalis*. Translated by Louise Ropes Loomis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1916.

Likoudis, James. "Eastern Orthodoxy: Primacy and Reunion." *American Ecclesiastical Review* (February 1966): 104–16.

Lindsay, Colin. *The Evidence for the Papacy*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870.

Logan, F. Donald. *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Lossky, Nicholas O. *History of Russian Philosophy*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1951.

Louth, Andrew. *Greek East and Latin West: The Church, AD 681–1071*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007.

_____. *Maximus the Confessor*. London: Routledge, 1996. Republished by Taylor & Francis e-library, 2005.

———. *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Maloney, George A. *A History of Orthodox Theology Since 1453.* Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976.

Mann, Horace K. *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages.* Vol. 3. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., Ltd., 1906.

———. *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages.* Vol. 4. Translated by Horace K. Mann and Johannes Hollensteiner. St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1925.

Manning, Henry E. *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost: Or Reason and Revelation.* London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865.

Manoussakis, John P. *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.

Mar Bawai Soro. *The Church of the East: Apostolic & Orthodox.* Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014.

Markus, R.A. "Popes and Emperors." In *The Papacy.* Edited by Paul Johnson and Michael Walsh. Chicago: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997.

Martin, Edward J. *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy.* London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930. Republished by Mimesis International, 2014.

Martin, Ralph P. and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Maunder, Chris, ed. *Documents of the Christian Church.* 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Maximov, George. "The Heresy of Constantinople Papism." *Orthodox Christianity.* January 30, 2019. http://orthochristian.com/118982.html.

Maximus the Confessor. *Disputations with Pyrrhus.* Translated by Joseph Farrell. South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Monastery Press, 2014.

———. *The Ascetic Life, The Four Centuries on Charity.* Translated and annotated by Polycarp Sherwood, O.S.B., S.T.D. New York: The Newman Press, 1995.

Máximos of Sardis. *The Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Orthodox Church.* Translated by G. McLellan. Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute, 1976.

McGuckin, John A. *The Eastern Orthodox Church: A New History.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020.

———. *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy.* Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.

———. *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

McNabb, Rev. Vincent, O.P. *Infallibility: A Paper Read Before the Society of St. Thomas of Canterbury*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1927.

_____, ed. *The Decrees of the Vatican Council*. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1907.

McManners, John, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

McPartlan, Monsignor Paul. *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, The Eucharist, & Church Unity*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015.

Meijer, Johan. *A Successful Council of Union: A Theological Analysis of the Photian Synod of 879–880*. Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1975.

Menze, Volker L. *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Merdinger, J. E. "Optatus Reconsidered." *Studia Patristica* 22 (December 1989): 294–99.

_____. *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997.

Metallidis, George. "Theology and Gnoseology and the Formulation of Doctrine in St. John Damascene." *Studia Patristica* 42 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006): 341–46.

"Metropolitan Kallistos [Timothy] Reflects on Orthodox Council." *Orthodox Christian Laity*. July 26, 2016. https://ocl.org/metropolitan-kallistos-reflects-orthodox-council/.

Meyendorff, John. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1979.

_____. *Catholicity and the Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983.

_____. *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church AD 450–680*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989.

_____. *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978.

_____. *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1962.

_____, ed. *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992.

Miller, J. Michael. *The Divine Right of the Papacy in Recent Ecumenical Theology*. Analecta Gregoriana, vol. 218, sectio B. Series Facultatis Theologiae, n70. Roma: Universitá Gregoriana Editrice, 1980.

_____. *The Shepherd and the Rock: Origins, Development, and Mission of the Papacy*. Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1995.

Moorhead, John. "The Laurentian Schism: East and West in the Roman Church." *Church History* 47.2 (June 1978): 125–36.

———. *The Popes and the Church of Rome in Late Antiquity.* London: Routledge, 2015.

Moreau, Dominic. "The Papal Appeal Court in the Sixth Century: The Example of the Roman Synod of 531." In *Recht haben und Recht bekommen im Imperium Romanum. Das Gerichtswesen de Römischen Kaiserzeit und seine dokumentarische Evidenz. Ausgewählte Beiträge einer Serie von drei Konferenzen an der Villa in den Jahren 2010 bis 2012.* Edited by Rudolf Haensch with the collaboration of Frederic Hurlet, et al. Warszawa: Taubenschlag Foundation, 2016.

Morris, John W. *The Historic Church: An Orthodox View of Christian History.* Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011.

Morrison, Karl. *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140.* Princeton University Press, 1969.

Moscow Patriarchate. "Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Problem of Primacy in the Universal Church." *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations.* December 26, 2013. https://mospat.ru/en/2013/12/26/news96344/.

Mostert, Marco. *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement.* Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 1987.

Muldoon, James. *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800–1800.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Müller, Gerhard Ludwig. "By What Authority: On the Teaching Office of the Pope." *First Things.* January 16, 2018. https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/01/by-what-authority.

———. "Statement on the Limits of Papal Authority." In *Roman Encounters: The Unity of the Faith and the Holy See's Responsibility for the Universal Church.* Translated by Susan Johnson. Irondale, AL: EWTN Publishing, Inc., 2019.

Nedugatt, George. "The Council in Trullo Revisited: Ecumenism and the Canon of the Councils." *Theological Studies* 71 (September 2010), 670. In *The Council in Trullo Revisited,* edited by George Nedugatt and Michael Featherstone. Roma: Pontificio istituto orientale, 1995.

Neil, Bronwen. *Leo the Great.* New York: Routledge, 2009. E-book edited by Taylor & Francis, 2009.

———. "The Western Reaction to the Council of Nicaea II." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 51.2 (2000): 533–52. www.jstor.org/stable/23968388.

_____. *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs: The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006.

Neil, Bronwen and Allen, Pauline. *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church: Letters from Late Antiquity*. Translated from the Greek, Latin, and Syriac by Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020.

_____. *Letters of Gelasius I (492–496): Micro-Manager and Pastor of the Church of Rome*. Adnotationes: Commentaries on Early Christian and Patristic Texts. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2014.

Neuner, J. and J. Dupuis, eds. *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1975.

Newman, John H. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878.

_____. *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*. Vol. II. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900.

_____. *Historical Sketches*. Vol. 2. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906.

_____. *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*. London: J. G. & F. Rivington, & J. H. Parker Oxford, 1837.

_____. *The Arians of the Fourth Century: Their Doctrine, Temper, and Conduct, Chiefly as Exhibited in the Councils of the Church between A.D. 325 & A.D. 381*. London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1833.

Nichols, Aidan, O.P. *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1993.

_____. *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*. Second ed. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992.

_____. "The Appeal to the Fathers in the Ecclesiology of Nikolai Afanas'ev: II. From Cyprian to Denys." *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992): 247–66.

_____. *The Latin Clerk: The Life, Works, and Travels of Adrian Fortescue*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011.

Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain. *The Rudder*. Translated by D. Cummings. Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957.

Noble, Thomas F. X. *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

_____. Review of *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity*, by G. E. Demacopoulos. *The Journal of Religion* 95.2 (April 2015): 258–59. https://doi.org/10.1086/681678.

Norwich, John Julius. *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy*. New York: Random House, 2011.

———. *Byzantium: The Apogee*. London: Penguin Books Ltd and Random House, Inc., 1993.

———. *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*. London: The Folio Society, 2003.

Oakeshott, Michael. *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*. Edited by Terry Nardin and Luke O'Sullivan. Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2006.

O'Connell, Patrick. *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I (758–828), Patriarch of Constantinople: Pentarchy and Primacy*. Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972.

Olmari, Yrjö (Archbishop Paul of Finland). *The Faith We Hold*. Translated by Marita Nykänen and Esther Williams. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

O'Malley, John. *When Bishops Meet*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.

Optatus of Mileve. *Optatus: Against the Donatists*. Translated and edited by Mark Edwards. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997.

———. *The Works of St. Optatus*. Translated by Oliver Rodie Vassall-Phillips. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917.

Orthodox Patriarchs. "Encyclical of the Patriarchs, 1848." *Orthodox Christian Information Center*. May 1848. http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1848.aspx.

———. "Encyclical of the Patriarchs, 1848." *Fordham University*. https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1848orthodoxencyclical.asp.

Ostrogorsky, George. *History of the Byzantine State*. Translated by Joan Hussey. New Brunswick: Rutger's University Press, 1969.

Palamas, Gregory. *The Homilies of Gregory Palamas*. Translated by Christopher Veniamin. Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009.

Palladius. *The Dialogue of Palladius Concerning the Life of John Chrysostom*. Translated by Herbert Moore. New York: Macmillan Co., 1921.

Palmer, William. *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church*. London: Kegan Paul Trench & Co., 1882.

Papadakis, Aristeides. *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus 1283–1289*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.

———. *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church AD 1071–1453*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994.

Parsons, Reuben. *Studies in Church History*. Vol. 1. Second edition. New York: Fr. Pustet & Co., 1906.

"The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895: A Reply to the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, on Reunion." *Orthodox Christian Information Center*. August 1895. http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1895.aspx.

Patriarch Irenaeus of Serbia. "The Serbian Church Re-affirms Its Position on Church Situation in Ukraine." *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Relations*. May 14, 2019. https://mospat.ru/en/2019/05/31/news174793/.

Patriarch Kirill. "'It Is Not Too Late to Stop': A Sorrowful Reply to Patriarch Bartholomew Concerning His Anti-Canonical Actions in Ukraine." *Orthodox Christianity*. January 2, 2019. http://orthochristian.com/118371.html.

"Patriarchate of Alexandria Recognizes Autocephalous Church of Ukraine." *Orthodox Times*. November 8, 2019. https://orthodoxtimes.com/the-patriarchate-of-alexandria-recognizes-the-orthodox-church-of-ukraine/.

Patsavos, Lewis J. *Primacy and Conciliarity: Studies in the Primacy of the See of Constantinople and the Synodal Structure of the Orthodox Church*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1995.

Paul VI. *Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church*. Boston, MS: St. Paul Editions, 1965.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

_____. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974.

_____. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

_____. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 4, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Peri, Vittorio. "The Role of the Bishop of Rome in the Ecumenical Councils." In *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, 123–58. Edited by Walter Kasper. New York: The Newman Press, 2006.

Peters, Edwards. "A Canonical Primer on Popes and Heresy." *In the Light of the Law: A Canon Lawyer's Blog*. https://canonlawblog.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/a-canonical-primer-on-popes-and-heresy/.

Pharr, Clyde. *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian: A Translation*

*with Commentary, Glossary, and Bibliography.* Union: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2001.

Photius. *Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople.* Translated by Cyril Mango. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.

Pitre, Brant. *Jesus and the Last Supper.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.

Pius V. "Regnans in Excelsis." In *Documents of the Christian Church,* third edition. Edited by Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 199.

Pius XI. *Quadragesimo Anno.* May 15, 1931. https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

———. *Lux Veritatis.* December 25, 1931. http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19311225_lux-veritatis.html.

———. *Mortalium Animos.* On Religious Unity. http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html.

Pius XII. *Mystici Corporis Christi.* On the Mystical Body of Christ. June 29, 1943. http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html.

———. *Sempiternus Rex Christus.* September 8, 1951. http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091951_sempiternus-rex-christus.html.

Placher, William C. *Readings in the History of Christian Theology.* Vol. 1, *From Its Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation.* Louisville: Westminster Johx Know Press, 1988.

Placidia, Galla. Letter 56. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 12. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3604056.htm.

Pomazansky, Fr. Michael. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition.* Translated and edited by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose. Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997.

Previté-Orton, C. W. *The Later Roman Empire to the Twelfth Century.* Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Price, Richard. "East and West at the Ecumenical Councils." *Academia.edu.* Accessed on December 7, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/36337866/East_and_West_at_the_Ecumenical_Councils.

———. "Fathers and the Church Councils." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*. Edited by Kenneth R. Parry. The Atrium: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015.

———. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*. 3 vols. Translated by Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. *TTH* 45. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, 2007.

———. *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*. Translated by Richard Price, with contributions by Phil Booth and Catherine Cubitt. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.

———. *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

———, trans. *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters*. 3 vols. *TTH* 51. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009.

———, trans. *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Price, Richard and Thomas Graumann. *The Council of Ephesus of 431: Documents and Proceedings*. Vol. 72, *Translated Texts for Historians*. Translated by Richard Price. Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Price, Richard and Mary Whitby, eds. *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*. Liverpool University Press, 2011.

*Prosper of Aquitaine: Defense of St. Augustine*. No. 32, *Ancient Christian Writers*. Edited by Johannes Quasten and Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. Translated by P. De Letter, S.J. London: The Newman Press, 1963.

"Protestant Scholars Admit Peter is the Rock." *Catholic Answers*. January 1, 199[illegible] https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/peter-is-the-rock.

Pulcini, Theodore. *Orthodox and Catholicism: What Are the Differences?* Chesterton: Conciliar Press, 1995.

Puller, Frederick W. *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900.

Quinn, John R. *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity*. New York: Herder and Herder Co., 1999.

Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew. *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study*. Oxford University Press USA, 2018.

Radding, Charles M. and Antonio Ciaralli. *The Corpus Iuris Civilis in the Middle Ages: Manuscripts and Transmission from the Sixth Century to the Juristic Revival*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Rahner, Hugo. *Church and State in Early Christianity*. Translated by Leo Donald Davis, S.J. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992.

Rahner, Karl. *Inquiries*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1964.

Ramsey, Archbishop Michael. *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1935.

Ratzinger, Joseph. *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*. Translated by Andrian Walker. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996.

———. *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology*. Middlegreen, UK: St. Paul Publications, 1987.

———. *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002.

———. *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*. Edited by Peter Hünermann and Thomas Söding. Translated by Henry Taylor. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008.

———. "Primacy, Episcopate, and Apostolic Succession." In *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, by Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger. New York: Herder and Herder, 1962.

———. *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium, An Interview with Peter Seewald*. Translated by Adrian Walker. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.

———. The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church. Accessed December 8, 2021. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19981031_primato-successore-pietro_en.html.

Rausch, Thomas P. *The Roots of the Catholic Tradition*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986.

———. *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003.

Ray, Stephen K. *Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999.

Reich, Emil, ed. *Select Documents Illustrating Medieval and Modern History*. London: P. S. King & Son, Orchard House, Westminster, 1905.

Rennie, Kriston R. "'Uproot and Destroy, Build and Plant': Legatine Authority under Pope Gregory VII." *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007): 166–80.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. *A History of Russia*, third edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Richards, Jeffrey. *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 2014.

Richardson, Cyril C. *The Church Through the Centuries*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Ltd., 1938.

Ripperger, Chad. *The Binding Force of Tradition*. Lincoln, NE: Sensus Traditionis Press, 2013.

Rivington, Luke. *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894.

_____. "The Acacian Troubles." *Dublin Review*, vol. 114 (1894): 358–80.

_____. *The Roman Primacy: A.D. 430–451*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899.

Rombs, Ronnie J. and Alexander Y. Hwang, eds. *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

Rufinus of Aquileia. *History of the Church*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016.

_____. *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia*. Translated by Philip R. Amidon, S.J. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Runciman, Steve. *A History of the Crusades*. Vol. 1, *The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

_____. *The Eastern Schism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Rusch, William G., ed. *Henry Chadwick: Selected Writings*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017.

Russian Orthodox Church. "Patriarch Krill: Papism is Dangerous as It Is Much Easier to Influence One Individual than a Group of People." *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*. November 5, 2019. https://mospat.ru/en/2019/11/05/news179651/.

_____. "Resolutions of the Holy Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (29 November–2 December 2017)." *The Russian Orthodox Church Department for External Church Relations*. February 12, 2017. https://mospat.ru/en/2017/12/02/news153781/.

_____. "Three Hierarchs of Bulgarian Orthodox Church Make Statement on Situation in Ukraine." *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*. October 9, 2018. https://mospat.ru/en/2018/10/12/news165075.

Ryland, Ray. *Draw from the Shadows into Truth: A Memoir*. Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2013.

Sanidopoulos, John. "The Synodikon of Orthodoxy." *Mystagogy Resource Center: An Orthodox Christian Ministry of John Sanidopoulos*. February 21, 2010. https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/02/synodicon-of-orthodoxy.html.

Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian* Church. Vol. 2, Ante-*Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100–325.* 8th ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901.

———. *History of the Christian Church.* Vol. 3, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311–600.* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1884.

———. *History of the Christian Church.* Vol. 4, *Medieval Christianity from Gregory I to Gregory VII, A.D. 590–1073.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.

Schaff, Philip and David S. Schaff, eds. *The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church.* In *The Creeds of Christendom,* vol. 2, sixth edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1931. Reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.

Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.* Vol. 14, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils.* Translated by Henry Percival. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900.

———, eds. *The Third Council of Constantinople: The Prosphoneticus to the Emperor.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900.

Schatz, Klaus. *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present.* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996.

Scheeben, Matthias. *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics.* Book 1. Part 1. Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2019.

Schick, Robert. *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study.* Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1995.

Schmemann, Alexander. *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Press, 1979.

———. *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963.

Schmemann, Alexander, ed. *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

Schimmelpfennig, Bernhard. *The Papacy.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Scholasticus, Evagrius. *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus.* Translated by Michael Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000.

Scott, S. Herbert. *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy.* London: Sheed and Ward, 1928. Reprinted by Mysterium Co., 2015.

Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing

Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3812.htm.

Second Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3819.htm.

Sharkey, Rev. Neil. *Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power.* Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950.

Shelley, Bruce L. *Church History in Plain Language.* 2nd ed. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995.

Sherrard, Philip. *Church, Papacy, and Schism: A Theological Inquiry.* Limni: Demose Harvey, 1978.

Shotwell, James T. and Louise R. Loomis, eds. *The See of Peter.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Siecienski, A. Edward. *Orthodox Christianity: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

_____. "Maximus the Confessor and Ecumenism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor.* Edited by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

_____. *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

_____. *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Simeonova, Liliana. *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross: Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy, 860s–880s.* Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1998.

Sire, H. J. A. *Phoenix from the Ashes: The Making, Unmaking, and Restoration of Catholic Tradition.* Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015.

Siricius. "Epistolae." In *The See of Peter,* edited by James T. Shotwell and Louise R. Loomis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Socrates Scholasticus. *Church History.* In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* second series, vol. 2, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by A. C. Zenos. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2601.htm.

Solovyev, Vladimir. *Russia and the Universal Church.* London: Geoffrey Bles—The Centenary Press, 1948.

Sotinel, Claire. "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: The Western View." In

*The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Edited by Michael Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Sozomen. *Ecclesiastical History*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Chester D. Hartranft. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2602.htm.

Squires, Stuart. *The Pelagian Controversy: An Introduction to the Enemies of Grace and the Conspiracy of Lost Souls*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019.

"St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome: Troparion and Kontakion." *Orthodox Church in America*. https://www.oca.org/saints/troparia/2010/02/18/100553-saint-leo-the-great-pope-of-rome.

Staniloae, Dumitru. *Theology and the Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

"Statement of the Secretariat of the Holy Synod of Antioch." *Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East*. June 27, 2016. https://www.antiochpatriarchate.org/en/page/statement-of-the-secretariat-of-the-holy-synod-of-antioch-balamand-27-june-2016/1448/.

Steenberg, Irenei. "Primacy and Identity: A Response to 'First without Equals' and the Tragedy of Deficient Ecclesiology." *Orthodox Christianity*. October 31, 2018. https://orthochristian.com/116859.html.

Stephens, Christopher W. B. *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority: The Canons of Antioch and Serdica*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Stevens, George B. *The Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901.

Stevenson, J., ed. *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1966.

Suárez, Francisco. *De fide theologica, Disputatio X de Summo Pontifice, sectio VI*. Edited by Vivès. Vol. XII, *Opera Omnia*. Paris, 1858:319.

Sullivan, Francis A. *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church*. New York: Paulist Press, 1983.

Syme, Ronald. *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 1939.

Symonds, Henry E. *The Church Universal and the See of Rome: A Study of the Relations between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism Between East and West*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939.

Synod of Antioch in Encaeniis (A.D. 341). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised

and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3805.htm.

Synod of Constantinople (A.D. 382). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3809.htm.

Tanner, Norman P. *The Councils of the Church: A Short History*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001.

Tertullian. *On Modesty*. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, translated by S. Thelwall. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0407.htm.

———. *Prescription Against the Heretics*. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, translated by Peter Holmes. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0311.htm.

The Apostolic Canons. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. *New Advent*. https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01001a.htm.

Theodoret of Cyrrus. *Ecclesiastical History*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 3, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Blomfield Jackson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2702.htm.

———. *Commentarius in omnes b. Pauli epistolas*. Edited by C. Marriott. Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1852. Reference found in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, edited by Mark J. Edwards. Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Third Council of Constantinople (A.D. 681). In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Henry Percival. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900. Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3813.htm.

Thompson, Glenn L. "On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century Synodal Formulae in the Codex Veronensis LX (review)." Review of *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century in the*

*Codex Veronensis LX*, by Lester L. Field, Jr. *The Catholic Historical Review* 91.1 (January 2005): 132–33.

Thunberg, Lars. *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1985.

———. *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor.* 2nd ed. Chicago: Open Court, 1995.

Tierney, Brian. *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism.* London: Cambridge University Press, 1955.

———. *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages.* Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1972.

———. *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

Tillard, J. M. R., OP. *The Bishop of Rome.* Translated by John de Stage. London: SPCK, 1983.

Tilley, Maureen. "Cyprian the Bishop (Review)." *Journal of Early Christian Studies,* 11 (Summer 2003): 243–45.

Tixeront, Joseph. *History of Dogmas.* Vol. 2. London: B. Herder Book Co., 1923.

Tollefsen, Theodor T. *St. Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons: Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Townsend, W. T. "The So-Called Symmachian Forgeries." *The Journal of Religion* 13.2 (April 1933): 165–74.

Treadgold, Warren. *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Tsviliy Olga. "Head of Fanar to Patriarch Theophilos: Don't Persist with Primates' Council." *Union of Orthodox Journalists.* January 10, 2020. https://spzh.news/en/news/67717-glava-fanara-patriarkhu-feofilu-ne-nastaivajte-na-sovete-predstojatelej.

———. "Phanar Rejects Pan-Orthodox Discussion of the Ukrainian Question." *Union of Orthodox Journalists.* March 1, 2019. https://spzh.news/en/news/60527-fanar-otkazalsya-ot-vsepravoslavnogo-obsuzhdenija-ukrainskogo-voprosa.

———. "Patriarch Theophilos Invites Head of Phanar to the Council of Primates." *Union of Orthodox Journalists.* January 3, 2020. https://spzh.news/en/news/67559-patriarkh-feofil-priglasil-glavu-fanara-na-sovet-predstojatelej.

Ullmann, Walter. *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages.* London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1977.

_____. "Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 11 (April 1960): 25–51.

_____. *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*. 3rd ed. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1955.

Urbainczyk, Theresa. "Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* Bd. 46, H. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1997): 355–73. *JSTOR*. www.jstor.org/stable/4436476.

Valente, Gianni, "Moscow Wants a Pan-Orthodox Meeting to Overcome the Ukrainian Crisis." Interview with Vladimir Legoyda. *La Stampa*. May 10, 2019 (modified July 2, 2019). https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2019/05/10/news/moscow-wants-a-pan-orthodox-meeting-to-overcome-the-ukrainian-crisis-1.33700954.

Valliere, Paul. *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Van Voorst, Robert E. *Readings in Christianity*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997.

Vatican Council I. "First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ: *Pastor Aeternus*." In *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*. Edited by J. Clarkson, John H. Edwards, William J. Kelly, and John J. Welch. Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973.

Vatican Council II. *Dei Verbum*. By Pope Paul VI. November 18, 1965. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

_____. *Lumen Gentium*. By Pope Paul VI. November 21, 1964. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

Vgenopoulos, Maximos. *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective*. Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 2013.

Vlachos, Hierotheos. *The Mind of the Orthodox Church*. Translated by Esther Williams. Levadia, Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1998.

Wace, Henry. "Flavianus." In *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature: From the First to the End of the Sixth Century AD*, edited by Henry Wace and William C. Piercy. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1994.

Walicki, Andrzej. *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Translated by Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979.

Walker, G. S. M. *The Growing Storm: Sketches of Church History from A.D. 600 to A.D. 1350*. London: The Paternoster Press, 1961.

Walker, Williston. *A History of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Revised by Robert T Handy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.

Wallach, Luitpold. "The Greek and Latin Versions of II Nicaea, 787, and the Synodica of Hadrian I (JE 2448)." In *Diplomatic Studies in Latin and Greek Documents from the Carolingian Age*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Wand, J. W. C. *A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965.

Ward, Robin. Review of *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century in the Codex Veronensis LX*, by Lester L. Field, Jr. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2006): 732–34. www.jstor.org/stable/23971781.

Ward, Wilfred. "After the Council (1871–1874)." In *Life of Cardinal Newman*. Vols. 1 and 2. *The National Institute for Newman Studies*. http://www.newmanreader.org/biography/ward/volume2/chapter31.html.

———. *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*. Vol. 2. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912.

Ware, Timothy. "Communion and Intercommunion." In *Primary Readings on the Eucharist*, edited by Thomas J. Fisch. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004.

———. "Eastern Christendom." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, edited by John McManners, 123–62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

———. "Orthodox and Catholics in the Seventeenth Century: Schism or Intercommunion?" In *Schism, Heresy, and Religious Protest*, edited by Derek Baker, 259–76. Cambridge University Press, 1972.

———. "Synodality and Primacy in the Orthodox Church: From the Keynote Address by Metropolitan Kallistos (Timothy Ware of Diokleia) at the IOTA Inaugural Conference, 9–12 January 2019 in Iasi, Romania." *Orthodox Christianity*. January 16, 2019. https://orthochristian.com/118652.html.

———. "The Decisive Importance of Councils in the Life of the Church with Metropolitan Kallistos [Metropolitan Kallistos (Timothy Ware) Reflects on Orthodox Council." *YouTube*. Lecture given at Fordham University, July 20, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVp3CVJqFq8.

———. *The Orthodox Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1993.

Washburn, Christian D. "St. Robert Bellarmine, Conciliarism, and the Limits of Papal Power." *Perichoresis* 18.6 (2020): 21–40. DOI: 10.2478/perc-2020-0033.

Wheeler, Robin. *Palmer's Pilgrimage: The Life of William Palmer of Magdalen*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006.

Wickham, Lionel R. "On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-century Synodal Formulae in the *Codex Veronensis LX*." Review of *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century in the Codex*

*Veronensis LX*, by Lester L. Field, Jr. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56.2 (2005): 341–42.

Wilken, Robert L. "Jaroslav Pelikan and the Road to Orthodoxy." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74.1 (2010): 93–103.

_____. "Jaroslav Pelikan, Doctor Ecclesiae." *First Things*. August 2006. https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/08/jaroslav-pelikan-doctor-ecclesiae.

_____. *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Willis, G. G. *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*. London: S.P.C.K, 1950.

Wirgman, A. Theodore. *The Constitutional Authority of Bishops in the Catholic Church*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899.

Weidenkopf, Steven. *The Real Story of Catholic History: Answering Twenty Centuries of Anti-Catholic Myths*. El Cajon, CA: Catholic Answers Press, 2017.

Wessel, Susan. *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint of a Heretic*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Edited by Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

_____. *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008.

Westalle, A. St. Leger. "The Fathers Gave Rome the Primacy." *The Dublin Review*, vol. CXXXII (January–April 1903): 100–114.

Whitehead, Kenneth D. *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: The Early Church was the Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000.

Williams, Rowan. *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018.

Woolley, Reginald M. *The Bread of the Eucharist*. Oxford: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1913.

Yarnold, E. J., S.J., and Henry Chadwick. *Truth and Authority: A Commentary on the Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*. London: SPCK, 1977.

Ybarra, Erick. "Faithful to the First Millennium: Fr. Joseph Ratzinger's Commentary on Eastern Orthodoxy." *Academia.edu*. June 6, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/49146621/Faithful_to_the_First_Millennium_Fr_Joseph_Ratzingers_Commentary_on_Eastern_Orthodoxy.

_____. "Papal Infallibility and Constituta of Pope Vigilius on Ibas of Edessa." *Academia.edu*. June 27, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/49426689/Papal_Infallibility_and_the_Constituta_of_Pope_Vigilius_on_Ibas_of_Edessa.

———. "The Roots of the Papacy: The Patristic Logic." *Academia.edu*. November 19, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/50040213/The_Roots_of_Papacy.

Zernov, Nicholas. "The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life." Review of *The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life*, by Ernst Benz. *Church History*, vol. 33.1 (March 1964): 99.

Zizoulas, John. "Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology." In *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, edited by Cardinal Walter Kasper, 231–48. New York: The Newman Press, 2006.